

Ruth 18-02-15

This is Thursday, the 15th of February 2018, and we begin a new study tonight in the Book of Ruth. We have completed our work in Kings and Prophets, but if you want a quick review, I thought about doing a review tonight and I thought, nah, I don't want to do a review, I want to move on. But just very quickly, you'll remember that as we got into the Minor Prophets, I gave you a quick guide, sort of a memory aid of what the Minor Prophets were.

We had Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah, and we had little memory aids for those. Then we had the four major prophets and then we had the last six Minor Prophets. Well, I'm boiling that down to a written form and it'll be posted in the Kings and Prophets folder on the website.

And for your review, if you want to try to retain all of the things we've studied over the last five years, especially the prophets in their setting, that will be a quick memory jog. But I'm not going to go through it tonight. There it is, I have it, you don't, but you soon will.

So you'll notice I'm wearing short sleeves tonight in honor of the 80 degree weather we've had here in Oklahoma in February. And I've got fishes on my shirt, so you know this is going to be a wonderful class. But as I say, it is the 15th of February and we're going to begin tonight the Book of Ruth, to which you can be turning.

You have to pay close attention, there will be pop quiz questions along the way, and an invitation to see if you can deduce what I'm about to say before I say it. But it's a wonderful book and I'm excited to begin the study. So let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask His blessing on our fellowship and then we'll begin.

Father, it is a wonderful remembrance that You are our strength and our Redeemer. We thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ and the wonderful privileges and the standing that we have before You in Him. We thank You for our trials.

We thank You for our challenges and for our difficulties. We know that You carefully measure those into our lives to prosper us, to help us to grow, to strengthen our faith and our reliance on You, our remembrance of the grace that is available to us through Your Holy Spirit. And we pray that tonight as we begin this study of this wonderful portion of Your Word, that Your Spirit will be our teacher and will make it real and pertinent and meaningful to each one of us, not only as we listen to it and as we think about it, but as we continue to live the lives that You've assigned us, that it will be a source of strength and motivation and encouragement in these days ahead.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. The book of Ruth in your Bible follows the book of Judges, and that was its original location in the Hebrew Bible.

It has moved around a little bit in the Hebrew collection. It is included in the section known as

the writings. Now, when you have the Tanakh, which is T-N and then K, T for Torah, N for Nevi'im, or the prophets, and then K for the Ketuvim, the Ketav, what they originally cut into stone, or you cut a covenant, you write a covenant, so T-N-K.

The Jewish Bible is often known as the Tanakh, and the Jewish Publication Society maintains wonderful editions of those. You can get bilingual, see the Hebrew on one side and the English on the other. Matthew's got one here.

But you'll find that you have to do some adjusting because the books are not in your King James order. They're in the Hebrew Bible order, and you have to start at the right-hand side and move your way left. It reads from right to left, just like the language.

So it's a fun book. If you want to give somebody a gift while you pick up an inexpensive copy of that, just be sure it has a good binding so that I don't have to repair it later. Look for a Smith's own binding if you're going to get a good copy of any book.

Make sure it's got thread and not a glorified paperback, but I digress. The Book of Ruth. The Book of Ruth.

This book is interesting on a number of levels. Let me give you just two quick points of introduction. We're not going to dwell long on the introduction, but it is probably written in the days of King David, not before that, based on the ending where it gives the genealogy of Salmon and Boaz and Obed and Jesse and then David.

And we know that the significance of this story, there were possibly many stories like this in Israel, but because this leads directly to David the king, it was especially significant. And sometime in his days or shortly thereafter, this family story was enshrined in scripture and preserved. And it is not clear who wrote it.

If that was important, God would have told us. It seems to subsist on its own as a story and it doesn't need authentication or authority, such as a biblical writer like Moses or one of the gospel writers might need to have. What is interesting in terms of when it was written and when the story takes place has to do with genealogy and chronology.

And that goes to the end of the book. And we'll talk a little bit more about that when we get to chapter four. But because it relates to the importance of the book and part of the purpose of the book in... Let me just get that.

Okay, good. Because it relates to the importance of the book, we'll take a quick look at the last verse. If you flip over to the last verse, odd thing to do in the introduction, but you find in the closing section beginning in verse 18, this is the genealogy of Perez.

Perez begot Hezron, Hezron begot Ram, Ram begot Amenadab, Amenadab begot Nashon, Nashon begot Salmon, Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David. And so Boaz, of course, is in the center of this. We have his antecedents and then

we have his descendants.

But what we're going to find when we get to this section is that they're of necessity... If you remember that Salmon, Boaz's father, married Rahab, the harlot, and yet you have Obed, Jesse, David. So three generations later, you have King David. Well, here's a quiz question for you.

Who thinks they know about the year that Joshua conquered Jericho? What's our standard traditional date? 1440 is the Exodus. They wandered for 40 years and somewhere very close to 1400 BC is the traditional time when Joshua takes the people across the Jordan. You have Jericho, you have 1400.

When is David on the scene? And these are good general facts to have in your mind just for chronological purposes. David is alive in 1000 BC. He's probably born maybe 1060, 1040, somewhere in there.

And reigns as king. His son Solomon builds the temple. And the David-Solomon United Kingdom regime spans right around 1000 BC, give or take.

You've got Solomon later. You've got David a little earlier. Samuel, of course, anoints David somewhere in the 10XX years, 1040, 1050, 1060, somewhere in there.

You got Goliath and King Saul and all of that in the decades prior to 1000 BC. So here's my thought. Solomon is a man.

He marries Rahab, who is a grown woman with a family, in 1400 BC. David is born, let's just round it off and say 1050 BC. What is that distance? How many years is that? 1400 to 1050.

Do the subtraction, even I as an English major, come out with 350 years. Okay. Now, according to this, Boaz, Obed, Jesse.

Salmon, who marries Rahab shortly after 1400, even if they get with it and have a child in 1399, and that's Salmon, I'm sorry, Boaz. You see the problem here. You got three generations spanning 350 years.

Each of these guys would have had to live and reproduce at a pace of about 130 years. You see that? And the reason I point this out, it is a reminder that the genealogies in the Bible are largely based on prominent members of the line. So my father, D.J. Hull, was a prominent member of the line.

They might say Sam Hull, son of Denny Hull. Then they might skip back to William Jesse Hull. He's the son of William Jesse Hull.

And they might skip Samuel Monroe Hull. They might skip Olney Curtis Hull, just going back because of some prominence or some famous deed or prolific family or whatever. And so they tie you back to your clan and to prominent members of the clan.

It is pretty apparent that the biblical patriarchal lifespans did not pertain this late. Moses lasted 120 years, but he wasn't having children at 120. He and his Midianite wife had their children way earlier on.

So it's clear that unless there's something really extraordinary going on, this is... And by the way, another reason I point this out, this genealogy of Nashon to Salmon to Boaz to Obed to Jesse to David is repeated four different places in scripture. It's in Chronicles, it's here, it's in Matthew, and it's in Luke. And none of them include the intermediaries.

And you say, well, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, the thing is established. And here we've got four. But it is a reminder.

And this is why the 6,000 year span of human history is suspect, because it is based on taking all of the genealogies literally. And you find it really stretches credibility and the other biblical evidence to assume that. But we're going to be looking more at this genealogy.

And I've freshened your mind and introduced you to it, because we're going to look at it here as we get into the text of the book. Now, that's pretty much all of our introduction. Let's start the text.

Ruth chapter one, verse one. And we're going to read the first five verses. Now, it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land.

And a certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to dwell in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech. The name of his wife, Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Malon and Kilion.

Malon and Kilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left and her two sons.

Now, they took wives of the women of Moab. The name of the one was Orpah, the name of the other Ruth. And they dwelt there about 10 years.

Then both Malon and Kilion also died. So the woman survived her two sons and her husband. That's how the book begins.

Now, all of us are aware of the general flow of the story. I think each of you could probably tell me the outline of the story from beginning to end. And because of that, you know that this book, and as a part of our introduction to the book, takes us from a problem situation to a providential outcome.

It starts out problematic. Here's a woman that loses everything in a foreign land. It starts out with barrenness, and it's going to end up with blessedness.

It's going to start out with famine, and it's going to end up with plenty. It starts out with Ruth as an outcast, and she's going to end up as an integral link in the royal line of Israel. So the

movement of this book, if you ever wanted a book that was hopeful and demonstrated God's grace and God's power and God's intervention in the lives of people of faith, this is your book.

You could not start with a more dismal situation, and you could not arrive at a more amazing conclusion than is sketched out in this book. And it has been described even in secular eyes as one of the greatest short stories in existence. There is a delicate balance.

There is a wonderful movement in the plot, and to the conclusion there is suspense along the way. You're not sure what's going to happen in the middle part. So let's take a look now at verse one, because there's a lot more, as we typically find, there's a lot more here than meets the eye.

What would you say is the first significant detail there in verse one? What strikes your eye first? You can tell me. What does it look like? You got that typical biblical phrase, now it came to pass. When does it come to pass? In the days of the judges.

This is great in Hebrew because the word judge in Hebrew is shafat, and so there's a doubling of that word. It's in the days when the judges, the shoftim, shafoted. When the judges were judging.

That's what it literally says. In the days when the judges were judging. Now, what is the preceding book to this book? Judges.

So the author right away establishes the time which tells us something about the situation. Now this would have struck Israelite ears much more forcefully than it does ours. We say in the days when the judges were judging.

Okay, well, you know, Gideon Samson, I get it. But what is the real situation in the days of the judges? What is the setting for this story? Well, first of all, the days of the judges. If you turn back to Judges chapter 2, verses 10 through 19, what is going on in the land? What's going on in the days of Elimelech and Naomi and their two sons? Turn back to Judges chapter 2, beginning at verse 10.

When all that generation, that's the generation that came in with Joshua and conquered the land and established settlements and began to plant and reap harvests and so on. And Joshua, the son of Nun there in verse 8, died. He was 110 years old.

They buried him in the border of his inheritance. When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord, nor the work which he had done for Israel. This is the days of the judge.

Children of Israel, verse 11, did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. They forsook the Lord God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them. They bowed down to them and they provoked the Lord to anger.

They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. This is the male and female Canaanite goddesses. The anger of the Lord was hot against Israel.

Now, what did God say He would do if they came into the land and forsook the covenant and began to serve other gods? Well, turn back a few more pages to Deuteronomy chapter 28. This is just the setting for our story here. Deuteronomy 28, beginning in verse 15.

God says in Deuteronomy 28.15, It shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in. Cursed shall you be when you go out.

The Lord will send on you cursing, confusion and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me. The Lord will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning, fever, the sword, scorching, mildew.

They will pursue you till you perish. The heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The Lord will change the rain of your land to powder and dust.

From the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed, etc. So when it says in the days when the judges were judging, there was a famine in the land, why do you think there's a famine in the land? Is this just a happenstance? In the days of the judges, remember in chapter 17 of Judges it says, every man did what was right in his own eyes. That's chapter 17 verse 6 of Judges.

Every man did what was right in his own eyes. Well, hence the famine. Hence that Gilgal cycle we've seen previously in the book of Judges, where they get so oppressed they cry out and God sends them a judge and says, look if you'll just straighten up and be obedient, I can bless you again.

And they'll go for a little while, they'll go for a generation. Then they fall apart and they're oppressed. The Moabites come in and oppress them.

The Ammonites come in and oppress them. While you're there in Judges, just flip over to chapter 3 and look at verse 12 through 14. The children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord.

This is Judges 3.12. Children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. He gathered to himself the people of Ammon, that's their brethren, right? Moab and Ammon.

You remember the origin of these people. This is Lot and his two daughters after Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed and they're in the cave and they get their father drunk and the next thing you know they have sons. And one daughter has Moab, which means from my father, Moav.

The M means from and Av means father. Remember in the New Testament it says the Holy Spirit helps us cry out Abba, father. Well that A-B is father.

Av is the ancient Semitic root. And so Moav means from my father. His very name speaks of his incestuous beginning.

So Eglon the king of Moab gets the Ammonites and the Amalekites. Who are the first ones to attack Israel when they come out of Egypt? It's the Amalekites. That's when Moses is up there and they've got to get somebody, you know Aaron and Hur I think it is are on each side of him holding up his arms and anytime his arms droop they start to lose.

Joshua's down there fighting the battle and they prop his arms back up and then they prevail. That's Amalek they're fighting down there in the valley. So these are the sworn hereditary ancient enemies of Israel.

They've completed the journey across the wilderness. They've come into the land under Joshua and God's mighty hand and miraculous provision and now they're being disobedient and all their old enemies are rising. The only other thing you could have is Pharaoh and the Egyptians come in to just make it a complete hat trick here.

So you've got the Moab and Ammon and Amalek coming together and they went and defeated Israel and took possession of the city of Palms. You know what the city of Palms is? I'll give you a hint. What is the first town Joshua conquered when he crossed the Jordan? That's the city of Palms, Jericho.

Jericho is the city of Palms. We studied this when we were doing Elisha. Go up old bald head and why was there such severe discipline after he'd sweetened the water at the city of Palms at Jericho? Anyway all of these things tie together.

So that's the situation when you turn back to the book of Ruth. And who is one of the most recent invaders and oppressors and disgusting bad guys to come into the land as a part of God's judgment? Eglon king of where? Moab. So here's the famine and where does Elimelech decide to take his family? Directly into the heart of the enemy's land, Moab.

Now you'd say well but there's a famine. Don't you have historical precedent for biblical figures

departing when there's a famine? Who can you think of? There's another pop quiz question here. Who can you think of that left the land because of famine? You can say it out loud.

Abraham. Abraham is one of the first right? There was a famine in the land in Genesis 12. I mean Abraham has hardly gotten to the promised land and there's a famine.

Look at, well we don't have time to turn there. But you remember Abram and Sarai go down to Egypt and he says she is my sister? And Pharaoh says she's a good looking sister. I think I'll bring her into the royal harem.

And next thing you know there's cursing and weirdness in Egypt and they start investigating and find out that Abram has told a little bit of a fib. I mean she is his sister but she is also his wife. And this is a dangerous threat to the line Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

If she ends up having children with Pharaoh, God's promise is up in the air to say the least. So Abram goes down. Should he have left the land? God doesn't necessarily rebuke him and say boo on you for leaving the land.

But look what happens when he does leave the land. It's bad news. Later on Isaac is going to leave the land.

And you remember the whole similar issue that he has. Jacob is going to leave the land. Joseph becomes the Pharaoh in Egypt or second to the Pharaoh.

He's the caretaker of all the goods and they have a famine. That's what instigates the brothers going down for grain to Egypt and so on. And eventually Joseph moves his whole family down to Egypt.

You think well this can't be a bad thing. But what happens in the succeeding decades? They end up being slaves down there. Stayed too long.

Got comfortable. God didn't say I'll give you the land of Egypt did he? What did he tell Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? What is God's promise? This is the land I will give you. This land up north.

And it's a wide stretch. It stretches all the way to the great river Euphrates and all the way down to the southern deserts and to the edge of Egypt. But it's not Egypt.

And as nice as Goshen is, it's not the promised land. So the temptation to solve a physical problem with a physical solution. I will move.

I will make some big change. Has to be considered in the light of God's promises. There is a time to do something different.

There is a time to move. Get the up. Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees.

That was a good move. But it was based on stepping into a promise of God, not stepping out of

it. So this famine, clearly if they knew the law of Moses at all, they would know this is a judgment from God.

So is it legitimate to leave the land? What do we know about the land? What do we know about the covenant responsibility to the land? When Joshua came in and apportioned it by tribe and by clan and they established those settlements, they took the land. That particular area of Bethlehem and Judah is important. We know in retrospect how important, but it's very important.

Where is Elimelech from? What does it say in Ruth? In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land and a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah. And this is actually in the Hebrew text, two separate words. A man from the house of bread, Beit Lechem.

A man from the house of bread in Judah. So I want you to look at the names. The names here are so fraught with significance.

This is the house of bread. There's a famine in the land. He lives in the house of bread.

Where should you stay if there's a famine? If you're at the house of bread, and by the way, Ruth and Boaz's great grandson, David, is going to write in Psalm 37, 25, I've never seen the righteous go hungry or his seed begging bread. What is the key to surviving in a time of national judgment such as this? Is it to try to run out from under the judgment into an evil land? Or is it to trust that God will take care of those who honor him? I will honor those who honor me. Remember Jesus experienced a famine in Matthew chapter 4? 4, 1 through 4 of Matthew.

Remember Jesus, after his baptism by John, he went into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. What is the first test Jesus faces when the devil comes to him? Another pop quiz, who remembers the very first temptation? See, there's a woman that's been studying a while. Yes, what does Satan say? If you're the son of God, turn these stones into lechem.

And I would bet money that the devil is talking Aramaic, not Greek. And he says, turn these ebons, perhaps. Remember ebon etzer, stone of help? Ebon is the Hebrew word for stone.

He says, turn this ebon into lechem. And what does Jesus say? Well, it's a time of extremists, and I've been out here 40 days, and I certainly can't starve, I can't accomplish my salvation purpose if I die of hunger out here. And you know, God has promised sustenance, and here's a rock.

What does he say? Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. What are the words that proceeded from the mouth of God about this land that Elimelech occupies? Stick. It's your inheritance.

Don't abandon it. Don't leave it. God will supply all your needs if you're faithful, but he cuts and runs.

So I would submit to you that this is a mistake, evidenced by the fact that he is going to not only go to Moab, but the famine does not last indefinitely. The famine ends, but Elimelech, and Malon, and Kilion do not return. And the order that we read here is very interesting because it says, the name of the man was Elimelech.

Elimelech means, my God is king. Eli, remember Jesus on the cross? Eli, Eli, my God, my God. Eli is my God.

Melech is king. My God is Lord of all. King of kings.

That's his name. But apparently famine is king in his thinking, and not God. He sort of betrays his name.

The name of his wife is Naomi, and Naomi means pleasantness. And so if your God is king, and your wife is pleasant, why doesn't he stick it out? The names of his two sons are Malon and Kilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem. A lot of times people think that Ephrath is just a synonym for Bethlehem, but these are Ephrathites of Bethlehem.

And you know the prophecy in Micah that says, and you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah. And you keep seeing this name Ephrathah come up. If Bethlehem is enough, why does Ephrathah keep getting linked to it? I was curious.

Anybody know why? Good, because I didn't. I didn't know either. And so I looked it up.

Where does this come from? The first mention of Ephrathah is way back in the life of Jacob. And this is where Rachel dies. She gives birth to Benjamin, and then she dies outside Bethlehem in this place called Ephrathah.

But as with a lot of cases where a later name attaches to an earlier location, you know Bethel is retroactively put back for the town of Luz, where Jacob saw the angel ladder. This is probably a name that it gained after they conquered the land. And how I know this is that in Chronicles, turn to 1 Chronicles Chapter 2. This seems like a departure, but it's actually very pertinent to understanding our story.

1 Chronicles, it's going to be to the right. You've got Kings and Chronicles. You remember all of these chapters in Chronicles with all the genealogies and people tend to just skip them over.

And when they have the Bible reading, you know, read your Bible in a year, this is the real tedious part. You know, this guy beget that guy, and these are the sons of so-and-so. But it's very interesting here, because in Chapter 2 of 1 Chronicles, and you get down to the sons of Judah in verse 3. The sons of Judah were Ur, Onan, and Shelah.

These three were born to him by the daughter of Shua, the Canaanites. Remember Judah married a woman of the land. And this is something, it wasn't formalized in the law yet, but all of the parents got greatly discouraged when this happened.

You remember Isaac and Rebekah got very vexed when Esau married women of the land. They had sent Jacob back up to Haran to find somebody from their own people. So, and you remember what happened in the story of Judah? You remember what happens to these sons? Ur gets married to a lady named Tamar, and then he dies, and they haven't had any children yet.

And by the Leveret Law, and this doesn't have anything to do with Levi, Leveret is Latin that means brother or something. But it's lowercase if you write it down, the Leveret Law. And this goes back again before the Law of Moses, that you raise up children to your deceased brother.

And so she was given to Onan. Well, Onan didn't want to raise up children to his dead brother Ur, and so he would not allow her to get pregnant. And so God killed him.

And so she says, well, by the Leveret Law, your next son Judah should be my husband as soon as he comes of age. Shelah, he was kind of a young guy, and Judah makes the excuse, well, you got to wait until he grows up. Well, evidently he was old enough, and this was a lame excuse.

And so then she dresses up like a prostitute, and she waits for Judah to come by, and he gives his staffing pledge, and she ends up getting pregnant to raise up descendants in the clan. And so Ur was wicked in the sight of the Lord. You find here in 2.3 of 1 Chronicles, the Lord killed him.

Tamar, his daughter-in-law, bore Judah, Perez, and Zerah. Now we tend to remember that the Lord Jesus is descended from David, and we tend to remember that David has as his great-grandmother, at least, Rahab. But we tend to forget that further up the line, David is descended from Judah through Tamar's son that came about by this strange interlude.

You know, they used to make a movie called Strange Interlude. Well, this is what I call a strange interlude, where a woman seduces her father-in-law and ends up pregnant, and she bears him twins. You remember? There was Zerah breaking through, and they had to tie a string around their wrists to see who was the eldest, Perez and Zerah.

And you can read that back in Genesis. But anyway, the sons of Perez, Hezron. Now Hezron ought to ring a bell, because we saw that at the end of the book of Ruth.

Hezron is a son of Perez. And then you come on down to verse 9, the sons of Hezron. Now who is Hezron? Hezron is Judah's grandson, right? You've got Judah, you've got Perez, then you've got Hezron.

Sons born to Hezron in verse 9 there are Ram, is the middle one, Ram begot Amenadab, Amenadab begot Nashon, leader of the children of Judah, Nashon. And Nashon is also mentioned there at the end of Ruth. Nashon begot Salmon, this is Salmon, this is the guy that married Rahab.

Salmon begot Boaz, Boaz begot Obed, Obed begot Jesse. This is another one of those four

genealogical records that I was talking about. And then Jesse's sons are listed and you eventually get down there to David.

So why is this important? Well, because as you trace these people and you see that God overcomes all kinds of human failing. There was a human failing in the family of Judah. Judah married Canaanites and his sons were no goodnicks and evil in the sight of the Lord.

But he doesn't do the right thing and although it isn't right to seduce your father-in-law and dress up like a prostitute and so on, she ends up being vindicated. You know, they're fixing to put the death penalty on her and she ends up being vindicated and Judah confesses that he had this liaison and basically legitimizes her and that legitimizes the two sons. But it's a weirdness and it speaks of human shortcoming and human failing.

But from that comes this line and then, so you've already got Rahab who is manifestly a Canaanite woman, but what's the difference? Tamar trusts the Word of God and says the Levirate Law should pertain. And she's a woman of faith and so her offspring become legitimate. Rahab is a woman of faith, as we know, hanging the scarlet thread in the window and she marries into.

She says, I'm fully vested in the nation of Israel and in the God of Israel. And despite her origin, she's legitimized. Then we're coming down now to the days of Elimelech and he is faithless and he leaves his land, which he should not do.

He is going to die and his two sons are going to die, even though they've got a good genealogy, so to speak, in the land. They're going to die and a Moabite woman is going to come in and her faith is going to legitimize her. There's all kinds of curses on the Moabites, gracious sakes, not allowed into the assembly of the 10th generation and all the rest of it.

But because of her redemption by Boaz, because she married in to the line and into the nation, she becomes legitimate. It's her faith. It is her relationship with God that overcomes all of these obstacles.

And you look at the colors in the yarn that lead you down to King David and from him all the way down to the Lord Jesus. And it speaks of the grace of God and the faithfulness of God. He can overcome anything, any shortcoming, any shortfall, any mistake.

He can turn cursing to blessing. He's going to turn this trip into Moab, which is wrong on all counts, into blessing. It's going to go from famine to prosperity, from outcast to integral to the line of not only the King, but the Savior, and from a complete hopeless famine problem situation to incredible prosperity with Boaz.

But as we finish up here tonight, let's take one more quick look at Ruth chapter 1. Now this ought to speak extra volumes to us, doesn't it? When you read that verse 1, it came to pass. I love this. There's actually, it came to pass twice in this.

In Hebrew, it's the *waw* consecutive. It's the first word in this book is *and*, which ties it to what came before. It doesn't start from nowhere.

It just picks up. It says, *and then*, so to speak, it came to pass. In the days when the judges were judging, it came to pass that.

You have again. So it came to pass, and then it stops and gives you the time and the circumstance. There was a famine in the land, and a certain man in Bethlehem, Judah went to dwell in the country of Moab.

He and his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech, his wife, Naomi, Melon, Kilion, Ephrathites. Ephrath is a place name, but it was named for a wife of Caleb.

Now this is not Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. This is Caleb, one of the descendants of Judah. This is back again in Chronicles, in 1 Chronicles.

Now once they go to the land, and by the way, Ephrath, the whole reason I belabored that a little bit is it means fruitful. They are fruitfulites. They live in the house of bread.

They live in the region called Ephrathah, which means fruitful. And if they had just trusted the promises of God, he would have made provision. I think Ruth would have still found her way to Israel by another means, in the same way that Isaac is going to be born to Abram no matter what.

Whether or not he does the Hagar thing, Isaac is going to be born. But God would use a better means. Solomon is going to be the next king of Israel.

It didn't have to be murder and adultery on David's part to end up with Bathsheba and with Solomon. But God brings his will about despite these mistakes, but only because there is faith and there is repentance. So Ephrathah means fruitful.

So Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and she was left and her two sons. You get the idea that they were young and they were certainly unmarried when they left the land. They were there ten years and sometime during that decade they took wives, verse 4, of the Moabites.

Now, we've just been through Ezra and Nehemiah and talked about how five hundred years after this, six hundred years after this, they dredge up an old scripture and say all you guys that have married these women of the land need to divorce them and send them hence and their children and purge them out. But this is much earlier on. You're in the days of the judges.

The monarchy has not happened yet. You are still fulfilling the command that was given to Moses and to Joshua to take the land and to establish the nation of Israel. This is centuries earlier.

And so when it says that Malon and Kilion marry in Moab, just as with Judah marrying a Canaanite, just as with Esau marrying women of the land, you figure this is going to not bode

well. Because we have prolific scriptures against this. It says in Deuteronomy 7, verses 1-11, do not intermarry with the women of the land, don't marry Moabites, don't marry Ammonites.

It says the same thing in Deuteronomy 23, verses 3-6. And you've got an entire chapter in Numbers 25 of what happens when the Israelites got tangled up with the Moabite women. Numbers 25, the whole chapter.

So with these women of the land. Deuteronomy 7, verses 1-11, 23, 3-6, and the whole chapter of Numbers 25 inveigh against this kind of marriage. But these guys do it anyway.

Now, in the meantime, the famine in the land has abated. How do I know this? Well, if you think ahead to the next chapter, when Naomi and Ruth return, Boaz has got grain coming out his ears. They've got barley harvest all over the place.

They've got sheaves. They've got corners left ungleaned. All the workers are saying, God bless you.

And he's saying, God bless you workers. And there's great prosperity and wonderful grain harvest all over the place. Well, this is not like the first time it's happened.

Boaz is prosperous because he's been doing this for a number of years. Well, why were they still in Moab? Why didn't Malon and Kilion and Naomi return to the land as soon as the famine was over? They got comfortable. They got complacent.

And they didn't have an investment in the covenant that says, stay on the land of your tribe and your clan and your family. And there's great danger because when Naomi finally does come back with no sons, there's nobody to claim the land. And the ownership of the land and the future of the land is now in extreme doubt.

And if Boaz does not redeem it because the nearer next of kin isn't going to redeem it, this land can be lost, be lost to the tribe and lost to the clan. And it's because of their indolence and their indifference and their lack of attention to their covenant obligation before God, not only to be faithful and obedient, but to follow the law of Moses that says, you get on that land and you stay there. And even if you have to lease it or give it away, it's going to come back in the year of Jubilee because it belongs to your tribe and your clan and your family, Laolam.

Well, this just doesn't seem to matter to them. And so they're ready to marry over in Moab and set up housekeeping and stay there. Well, for that reason, they die and they die childless in Moab.

Elimelech dies, the two sons die. This is not bespeaking the blessing of God. So our last verse here, they took wives of the women of Moab.

The name of one was Orpah, the name of the other Ruth, and they dwelt there about 10 years. Then both Malon and Kilion also died. The woman survived her two sons.

Now, do we know which one married what woman? Did Malon marry Orpah and Kilion marry Ruth? Or did Malon marry Ruth and Kilion married Orpah? It doesn't tell us here, does it? You might be scratching your head, but just to allay any sense of mystery, if you flip over to chapter 4, verse 10, Ruth the Moabitess, the widow of Malon, I have acquired as my wife, Boaz says. So now we know who married whom, but you got to go over to chapter 4 to find that out. It's not in chapter 1. So you got to figure Malon had good taste.

He married a quality woman. So they left the land. Why? Why did the family leave the land? There's a famine, and what's the ultimate outcome that you fear in a famine? You die, right? So they left to escape death from famine, and what happened? They died anyway.

They died anyway. It would have been an interesting book of Ruth if they had been faithful and obedient and had stayed there because Boaz would have still ended up with Ruth as his wife, but who knows how it might have happened. There might have been warfare and capture.

There might have been caravan travel. There might have been who knows what circumstance God would have used to bring them together. It's sad that this, in one sense, that this is the circumstance, but on the other hand, God has made it a part of his inspired account to show us how he works all things together for good to those who love him, and the theme of the book is that transformation from all of these negatives to all of these wonderful positives, and the pivot point in the center is the faith of Ruth, and we know that's coming up.

We know that wonderful short speech that she gives to her mother-in-law when she says, you know, your people will be my people and your God will be my God, but that is the transforming element. It releases God's grace. It releases God's ability to bless and to energize and to bring out of the ashes wonderful provision and blessing.

God waits for our trust. He waits for our endurance. He waits for our ability to see beyond the immediate.

It's easy to look at lack of bread and say, I've got to do something, to look at a lack and say, I've got to somehow get myself out of this. The Lord Jesus saw that test coming from the lips of Satan, and just because I have a need for bread doesn't mean I'm going to forget the promise of God. Man will live because of what God says.

That was Jesus' fortification against making this mistake. It's a wonderful theme, a little thread that runs through the Bible, the theme of bread. Remember David when he's on the run from Saul and he goes to the tabernacle and he asks for bread and he says, well, I don't have anything here but the holy bread, and they provide it to him, and Jesus is going to quote that later on, but what happens to all of the priests at Nob as a result of that? They're all slain by Saul's right-hand man there.

Bread, provision, watching for God's deliverance, keeping an eye on God's promises and being faithful to them is a big deal, and the Bible makes that point over and over again. So that's what

we're going to see upcoming here in the book of Ruth. Next time, there will be a handout in the folder, we'll have printed copies here, but in anticipation of next Thursday night, those of you that are at a distance, look in the new Ruth folder on the website and there's going to be a handout because one of my favorite things, not only is the entire book of Ruth a giant chiasm, and we know that right at the center of the chiasm is the important bit and everything else is brackets and parentheses around it, and right at the center is the big idea, but this chapter 1 is a chiasm, and if you want to entertain yourself, you can look at either the book or chapter 1 or both and see if you can work out this structure for yourself, but it's a beautifully constructed story, not only for its content, not only for its theme, and not only for its reflection of God's grace and the example of faith on the part of Ruth and Boaz, by the way, but it's beautifully structured and there are clues in those chiasms as to what God wants us to remember most.

We were thinking back on kings and prophets and thinking, well, what should I remember most? If I think back on Haggai or think back on Zechariah, what should I remember from those prophets? And you want to remember something, we spent weeks on them, and you think, well, I should remember something from it. What's the big idea? Well, these chiastic structures really help us focus on the big idea, and so we'll be looking at that for the book and for chapter 1 next time, but we'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the wonderfully interesting and challenging ways that you reflect that truth and bring it to our minds and to our hearts. We thank you for your Holy Spirit who enlivens it and calls it to our mind and helps us make sense of it and see its pertinence and its applicability in our own lives. We pray that as we reflect on even these first few verses of the book of Ruth, that it'll be a source of encouragement and motivation for us to not be daunted by our circumstances and not to turn to the same solutions that the world might resort to, but that we will remember your promises, we will remember the things that are ours in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in this day and age, what a wonderful heritage and what a wonderful set of promises we have because of your Son, the Lord Jesus. And we thank you for him and we pray these things in his name. Amen.