

Ruth 18-02-22

For those of you tuning in remotely, we have a handout tonight and to find it you can go to the website at gtpzweb.org and when you go to the audio archives tab, most of you have been there to pull old recordings, previous recordings. When you click that and you get the old screen and it's got all of the Old Testament and New Testament series listed, at the top where you have the menu, there is another option that says live class schedule and if you click that, the links for our GTBC hymnal, the Inspiring Hymns hymnal and below that is a link for our Ruth handout for tonight. And you can grab that and just pull it up on a screen or you can print it, it's a PDF and we'll be referring to it this evening.

You don't absolutely have to have it, don't miss class to try to print it, but it is in fact going to be something we talk about tonight. So, this is the 22nd of February, 2018 and we continue our study tonight. This will be our second session in the book of Ruth.

We'll be resuming in Ruth 1.6. Let's take a moment and ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship and that His Holy Spirit can bless the truth of His Word to our hearts. Father, we thank you for this opportunity to nourish our souls at the oasis of your Word. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ and the opportunities that we have to represent ourselves to you and before you, to be related to you as children, to know that we are secure in your hands and that there is a bright future awaiting us, all because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, what He continues to do as He represents us and intercedes for us at your right hand.

We thank you for the opportunity to study this portion of your Word and we pray that you will give us understanding, not only of what it says and what it means, but its pertinence as we look for ways to implement what we learn in our lives and in our relationships with one another. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well you will remember last time that the book of Ruth begins with the word and. We're going to see one of the reasons for that tonight. And it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled and we now have a little bit more understanding of why that is stated, what the conditions were in Israel in the times of the judges and their sort of up again, down again relationship with God.

There was a famine in the land. We know why those famines tended to come. At various times God would send famine.

God would deliver the Israelites into the hands of the Canaanites or into the hands of the Moabites or into the hands of the Midianites and they would realize that they had strayed far from God. God would send them a deliverer and for a time they remembered. It's like raising small children.

You can impress a point on them about behavior in the house or the good and proper things that they should do and they remember it right after a penalty. But of course the joy de vive

that little kids have tends to overcome their memory and they quickly unravel and fall apart and have to be reminded again. And so Israel as sort of an infant nation is going through this time of lack of concentration on their covenant relationship with God.

So there is a famine in the land. This is one of those times of discipline. A certain man of Bethlehem, Judah went to dwell in the country of Moab.

And this is fraught with meaning. We know who Moab is. We know what the Moabites have recently done to Israel in terms of deflecting them from their relationship with God.

This is harking back to the days of Balak and of Balaam and what ultimately happened with the Moabite women seducing the men away. But they go, of all places to go in a famine, they go to Moab. He and his wife and his two sons.

And whenever you think of Moab, you can't help but think of two sons because the origin of the nations of Moab and Ammon go back to two sons a lot that he had with his daughters. And it's not a happy beginning for a national entity. I don't think on their fourth of July they went back and revisited what a wonderful patriotic beginning it was.

The name of the man was Elimelech. This is what they call a theophoric name. It has an element of God plus some attribute of God.

God is king. The name of his wife was Naomi, which means pleasant. The names of his two sons were Malon and Kilion.

I think I may have omitted to mention last time that these are not names you would normally look down into the cradle and give to your sons because one means weak and the other means sickly. So, you know, well, here's my wife pleasant and my sons weak and sickly. But that's what they mean.

And it's amazing how God arranged that circumstances would entail that would cause men often to bear a name that would reflect their future. And evidently, perhaps, maybe they were just physically not strong from the beginning and it may have been very impressive that they survived. This is not necessarily a commentary on their spiritual life.

Nothing is said of these men. They were taken to Moab by their parents. So they were sort of reverse dreamers.

They were taken out of the land of promise to a foreign land. And perhaps because they had a weak constitution, they, along with their father, died in the land of Moab. The sickly just may mean that they were looking kind of sketchy from the very beginning physically.

In any case, they were Ephrathites of Bethlehem. Now this, as we said last time, is very significant. I started to give you the history from 1 Chronicles of Hezron, one of the grandsons of Judah.

And he has a son named Caleb who marries a girl named Ephrath. But that's not really the connection. And the connection is something we're going to look at tonight.

But it goes all the way back to the death of Jacob's second wife, Rachel. She died on the way to Bethlehem in a place called Ephrath. Ephrath and Bethlehem are both mentioned in connection with that.

And it's highly significant. We're going to see that tonight. So just put a little star next to Ephrath.

It's there for a reason. There is not a wasted word in Scripture. Every single detail counts if you're looking and ready to pick it up.

So Ephrathites of Bethlehem, Judah. They went to the country of Moab and remained there. We saw this last time.

Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died. She was left and her two sons. Now they took wives.

Evidently, Elimelech died not long after. We know the total time of sojourn for Naomi is ten years. So maybe two or three years into it, Elimelech dies.

These boys have come up evidently into their teens. And within just a couple of years of his death, they are of marriageable age. And so the widow and her two sons are living in Moab and they look around and they choose Moabite ladies to marry.

So one of them marries Ruth and the other marries Orpah. And they dwelled there about ten years. Then, both Malon and Kilion also died.

So the woman survived her two sons and her husband. She is, as they say, bereft. This is not something one looks forward to in terms of having to go on without everybody in your nuclear family, especially not at a tremendously advanced stage.

She's older, but she's not only buying green bananas. She's got some future ahead. So that concludes what we looked at last time.

Let's pick up now on verse 6 and we're going to read to the end of the chapter. And you know this story, but watch particularly for a couple of details that I'll point out as we go. So she, Naomi, verse 6, Ruth chapter 1, she arose with her daughters-in-law that she might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited his people by giving them bread.

Just let that verse soak for a minute. She had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited his people. It could have just said she heard that the famine was over, but it says where she was when she heard and that the Lord had basically ended the famine.

The Lord had visited his people. And we know in the book of Judges they're down, they turn, the

discipline has its intended effect, and then the Lord is able to once again bless. And this cycle has just turned, and while she's still in Moab, she had heard this.

Now had heard is probably a little bit stronger in English than it is in Hebrew, but it does catch the meaning, which is this had been known for a while. It didn't just happen. And she says, oh, fresh news from a caravan.

There's a good harvest in Israel. Let's go back. She had known this for some time.

It's not a fresh development. So now verse 7, therefore she went out 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. Now this is not a tremendously long journey.

This is not Abraham going from Ur of the Chaldees all the way to the land of promise. This is about 50 miles. This might be, you know, you figure some town that's about an hour away driving, that's about the distance.

This is doable in a couple of days on foot. If you can travel two miles an hour and go for eight or ten hours in a day, well under a week, you could be there. This is stopping, having meals, taking a casual pace, and probably a cart with some household belongings.

I mean, this was a little mini caravan. They may have joined with others who are also making the same return. We're not told of anybody except these three.

So they pack. Now you think about this. She goes, think about the process.

The second of the sons dies. I doubt they died on the same day, but maybe within months of each other. Suddenly all three women find themselves widows.

Naomi says, well, gals, you know, we've known for a while now that Israel is once again on its feet economically. I'm going to go back. And the gals say, we'll go with you.

Well, once this idea is in the air, it percolates. They make plans. They say their goodbyes.

They pack and they are on the way. This isn't something that, you know, Orpah originally said, Israel, I've never been to Israel. I don't want to go to Israel.

I mean, she's, she's on board and there was preparation time. There were days and weeks and goodbyes said and so on. And they are on the way.

They have traveled a portion of this 50 mile distance, although apparently they are still on the Moab side of the border, but they're evidently getting to sort of a crossover point. Maybe they are at the border. So a lot of times there's a decision point at the border.

You remember when Moses left Midian and he was going to go back to Egypt with God's commission to deliver the people and something happened at the border. He had to make a

decision because he's supposed to go back and be the leader and deliver the law and represent God's righteousness. And yet his sons with his Midianite wife have not been circumcised.

And this is something that goes all the way back to the covenant of Abraham. Moses is going to be, you know, the greatest prophet Israel ever sees, the greatest leader they ever have, and he's going in sort of disqualified. And so at the border, the Lord meets him and the context of the passage says if he hadn't gotten this squared away, he would have been ended and who knows, they might have been saying the law of Aaron or the law of her or the law of some other guy instead of Moses.

If he hadn't gotten this thing figured out at the border. So the border going into the land, and Joshua, there's quite a decision point. And once again, as they cross the Jordan with the ark, what's the first thing they do when they enter the land? As soon as they cross the border, what do all the Israelites that have been wandering for 40 years watching their parents go to glory, or actually enter into the dust, I suppose, what do they do? They're circumcised, circumcision at the border.

Well, of course, that's not going to be an issue with these ladies, but there is sort of a matter of the heart and a matter of level of commitment, and it comes to a head here at the border. So they are on the way to return to the land of Judah. In verse 7 and verse 8, Naomi says to her two daughters-in-law, go return each to her mother's house.

The Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. So these ladies are faithful, they have dealt kindly, and she says, you have been kindly to your husbands and your father-in-law and with me, may the Lord be equally gracious to you. And he says, go back, you don't need to come with me, I've got no prospects.

And she's going to elaborate that. But you'll notice, she says, go return each to her mother's house. Does this strike you at all? Who gives away the bride at a wedding? Traditionally.

God knows who's going to do it now, but who used to do it traditionally? I do. Then it changed, her mother and I do, which I thought was kind of a step down. It's okay.

Everybody to each his own. This is just me personally talking. But I think the biblical model certainly was that the father was responsible for his daughter's welfare up until he handed over that responsibility to the husband.

That's the old patriarchal, I don't know, it's all politically incorrect now. But that's the way it was in Israel. Father's responsible for the daughter until the point that he hands that responsibility off.

For this reason shall a man leave father, mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they too become one flesh. So, she says, go return each to her mother's house. Now, I see two possibilities here.

The scripture doesn't elaborate. But one thing is, there could have been some sort of episode in

Moab where a lot of the men died. Did they fight a battle? Were there heavy losses and casualties? It doesn't say these men died in battle.

It doesn't say how they died. From their names, I think they probably died of physical causes unrelated to accident or war. But it is possible that these gals had already lost their own fathers and that their mothers were likewise in Naomi's situation.

But there's still an extended family structure in all of the ancient Near Eastern and even modern Middle Eastern culture. The extended family is very important and very supportive. The other possibility, which I personally think is more likely from the context, is that she is saying here, you started out with a mother.

When you married my sons, you became drawn closer to me than to them because you have left your father and mother's house and have come and joined the household of Elimelech. Well, Elimelech is dead. Malon is dead.

Kilion is dead. So that which formerly linked us has died. And your more proper link would be back to your mother rather than me as your mother.

You see the thinking here? She's saying, you've got a mother that you really should be closer to, to me. And you can kind of start over again. She's going to go on, as you know, in this chapter to say, I'm too old to marry, but you guys have another shot.

You gals have another shot. So see how insidious the culture is. I never call girls guys, but people do all the time.

And now I've just done it and I'm horrified. You girls go back to your father's household and take another shot. You're young enough to have husbands again.

So go back to your mother who can help you get ready for another marriage is the idea, I think. Go back to your mother's house. But the fathers are not in view.

And I think also Naomi is just looking at a bleak landscape of nothing but women. She's not even, to her, there are no men left. You've heard that saying, I wouldn't marry you if you're the last man on earth.

Well, in Naomi's view, the last man on earth was a limeleck and he's gone and she's bereft. And so in her view, it's just a landscape of women. And she says, go back to your mother.

She could potentially have drifted into the family of Ruth or Orpah in Moab, conceivably. But she's drawn back to her homeland because in her heart of hearts, she recognizes the Lord. How do I know this? How does she view the end of the famine in Israel? The Lord has visited his people.

Even in her depression, even in her sort of clouded view of life. And she's naturally sad. She's naturally depressed.

She's naturally discouraged. She's naturally bitter. And it's not everything natural is proper, but we certainly understand how and where it came from.

She's going to say, I left full and I'm coming back empty. So it's understandable. But even in that, she knows God is there.

She knows the Lord is there. And she says, you know, I'm having a bad time of it, but the Lord has certainly visited Israel. I'm going to go back to Israel where the Lord is visiting his people.

And this is a good child of God instinct. Even when we're messed up, we should move toward the Lord. And as children of God, we have that new nature instinct.

So she's moving toward God, even though logically and verbally, she says a lot of other things. What is she doing? She's pulling up roots and going back to the land where God is at work. And this is a good thing.

So, the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. Verse 9, the Lord grant that you may find rest each in the house of her husband. This would be a new husband.

There's no house of Kilian, house of Malon left. So she's basically saying that you find new husbands and begin again. So she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Now, in ancient Near East, to kiss someone usually means kiss them goodbye. They don't really talk about greet one another with a holy kiss. When you kiss someone, you're saying aloha.

That's how they used to say it in Hebrew. No, they would say, you know, goodbye. And so when it says she kissed them, she is dismissing them in the direction of Moab.

She's basically turning them around and giving them a gentle push. She says adios. See, I can give you all the other languages except Hebrew.

Anyway, she says she... And so when she kisses them, they lifted up their voices and wept. This is not hard to imagine. It's a great... They've already been through a lot of sorrow together.

Each of them has suffered the loss of her husband. And now they're about to be separated from one another. And so it's a natural time.

There is a time to weep. And it's perfectly okay. It is fine.

Nobody should ever feel guilty about their grief, especially at a separation. Perfectly normal. So they lifted up their voices and wept.

And they said to her, surely we will return with you to your people. Now notice, this is the two of them speaking together. We will return with you.

We will come with you. But Naomi said, turn back my daughters. Why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Notice how she's dwelling on

what constitutes the link.

She says, go back to the house of your mothers. You've got genuine links there. The links that tied us together have, in Naomi's mind, dissolved.

So she says, if you were going to go with me and we were going to continue to be linked, how would that work? I would have to have more sons. You would have to wait for them to grow up, marry them. Then we would have the former relationship.

But things have inexorably and irreversibly changed. And so she gives this sort of pseudo-logical argument. Turn back my daughters.

Why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Turn back my daughters. And this is three times now. Remember Naomi in verse 8, return each to her mother's house.

Verse 11, turn back my daughters. Why will you go with me? Verse 12, turn back my daughters. Go, for I am too old to have a husband.

If I should say I have hope, if I should have husbands tonight and bear sons, I could get married tonight, nine months from now, have twins. Would you want to wait for them until they were grown? Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters, for it grieves me very much, for your sakes, that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me. It grieves me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.

And what she is doing here is a little bit, evidently, of guilt. She is wondering could she have done something different. She doesn't say the hand of the Lord has gone out against us.

The hand of the Lord has gone out against the limelight. The hand of the Lord has gone out against all those who left the land. She says me.

The hand of the Lord has gone out against me. She is now in addition to using the I don't have any sons and I don't have the prospect of having any sons and you couldn't wait for them if I did argument, added to that is God seems to be unhappy with me. You should get out of my periphery type of thing.

And again, it's natural when especially if you have a series of calamities and she's had three in a row. The only thing worse, I think, and I don't even know if you can rank them, but the worst things in human life are being bereft of your nuclear family members and she's lost three in a row. One strike, two strike, three strikes.

It's not hard to understand why she says, you know, woulda, coulda, shoulda, but God's against me now. So you too, you know, get clear of the bursting radius here and maybe God can bless you. You can go back and whatever.

So she links it to herself here. The hand of the Lord has gone out against me. Now this is the

second time that we have the action of the Lord associated with Naomi's thinking.

Naomi heard that God has visited his people in Israel. She says the hand of the Lord has gone out against me here in Moab. So you all go back.

I'm going to return. That's her argument. So naturally, once again, completely understandable.

You don't typically see this scene if it's three guys trying to make a decision about we're all going to go or we're going to split up. But they lifted up their voices and wept again. Notice Orpah kissed her mother-in-law.

What does it mean when you kiss? Goodbye. Kissed her mother-in-law but Ruth clung to her. Ruth didn't kiss her.

Naomi kissed Ruth. Ruth didn't kiss back earlier. So now Orpah kisses and she's going down the road.

Matthew and I were looking at various graphics to attach to the stream for this and looking at different scenes that have been depicted artistically, paintings and drawings. I was really struck by the ones where you have Naomi standing there and Ruth is clinging to her and you see a departing figure in the distance. You can't really blame Orpah.

It makes perfect sense. You wonder how it would have worked out if they'd both come back or if they had both stayed. It would have been an entirely different story.

But she returns and Ruth clung to her. And here is one of the most significant verses in the chapter. Naomi says, look, your sister-in-law has gone back to what? To her people and to her gods.

Naomi says, look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Identical situation for Orpah and for Ruth. Identical relationship to Israel, identical relationship to Naomi, identical opportunity.

What splits the fates of Orpah, who is never heard of again, and Ruth, who will be heard of for all eternity. What is the difference? Orpah never thought anything of the God of Israel. She has stuck with the traditions of her people, the gods of Moab, lowercase G, plural, is what she is returning to.

She is willing out of loyalty and she's a good woman. The reason she married an Israelite guy is she's got morals. Orpah is a really good woman.

She is loyal almost to a fault. And that loyalty would have carried her back to Israel if Naomi had not dissuaded her, evidently. How long she would have lasted, I don't know.

But she was willing to make the trip. But Naomi says, go back and she returns to her people and to her gods. And that's very significant because unlike her, Ruth said, and by the way

Naomi says for a fourth time to Ruth, return after your sister-in-law.

She says, go back, go back, go back, go back. So Ruth is having to sort of push uphill to stay with Naomi. Naomi is pushing her away.

But then this most famous and most beautiful of pieces of literature here, entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people and your God my God. The two things Orpah returned to, Ruth forsakes. Where you die, I will die and there will I be buried.

The Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts you and me. The Lord do so to me and more also. She already has a commitment to the God of Israel.

Evidently, while married to Malon somewhere during that courtship and marriage, she came to faith in the God of Israel. Orpah did not. The Lord do so to me and more also.

This, by the way, is the third time God has been mentioned now, once in visiting his people, once with his hand against Naomi, and once as a part of the pledge that Ruth makes to her mother-in-law. She basically says, as God is my witness, your God is my God and that God is my witness. So, verse 18, when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her.

Now, this is something you never see. I've talked about typical scenes between women, but you never see women that are together stop talking. I've never seen it, unless they all fall asleep.

But this doesn't actually mean that they stop talking. She stopped trying to dissuade her. She tells Ruth four times, go back.

Ruth says, stop telling me to go back, and so Naomi stops with the go back. There is a time to stop pushing your point of view, and Naomi realizes this. So, she stopped speaking to her about returning, is the idea.

She didn't just give her the cold shoulder. Now, the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. Oh, my goodness.

Bethlehem. This is really significant. And we're going to stop here in our reading, and we'll resume the story, because I want to do two things.

First of all, take a look at your handout. Hopefully, those of you in the land of afar, those of you listening from afar have had a chance to grab it. If not, you can get it after class.

Again, go to the website, go to audio archives, and when you see that page up at the top, there's a menu for other items on the old website. Go to live schedule, and on that live schedule page below the series listing, it's got the two hymnals, and then it's got this thing listed, and

you should be able to see it on a screen or print it. It looks like this.

It looks like a couple of what we call chiasm. It's named for the Greek letter chi, which is basically shaped like an X, and we're really talking about sort of a sideways V. We're looking at one half of the X, but things converge in the center, and each of the bracketing elements correspond. The top of your handout here shows you this beautiful, and by the way, this is not original to me.

I'd like to say it was, but it isn't. It's been noticed by a lot of people, including a couple of my former professors at Dallas Seminary. Dr. Constable at DTS has this in his notes.

One of my preaching professors, Reg Grant, has talked about this and talked about the purpose of structure, and I want to read you a quote from Dr. Grant. Reg Grant, he's now something big at DTS. He's the head of something, but when I had him as a professor, he was kind of new and really enthusiastic, a lot of fun, really great guy, but I want to read you a quote from him on what structure like this means.

It's easy to look at something like this and say, wow, isn't that cool, but here's a quote from Dr. Reg Grant. What benefit does the definition of plot structure afford the interpreter of the text? In other words, when you see a structure like this, and this is a structure, this is intentional. The writer of this story did this on purpose.

It's not an accident. So what benefit does it give us, is Reg's question. Once the reader discovers the type of structure of the narrative and the context, he says the locus of the defining element, it's the context.

Once you identify the structure and you figure out what context it's in, then he can more accurately reflect on the movement or development of the narrative from one level to the next and then to its climax and then to its denouement, its conclusion, its aftermath. This kind of literary analysis offers several practical benefits to the interpreter. One, it reinforces and adds dimension to correct exegesis. You interpret the text properly because the structure helps you know what's going on.

If it says people stop talking, what does that mean? How do we know? It doesn't mean that she climbed up and didn't say another word until they got to Bethlehem because of the context, because of the nature of the rest of the material. Secondly, it highlights the artistry of the writer and the audience's appreciation for the aesthetic beauty of God's inspired text. Scripture is beautiful on so many levels.

It's beautiful for what it does for us, the power that it imparts to us, the motivation that it gives to us. The inspiration strikes a resonant chord with the Holy Spirit in our souls. It makes real our hope.

It puts flesh and bones on the Lord Jesus Christ and everything that we have in Him. This is one of those perspectives that add to all of that. Thirdly, it prevents the interpreter from placing an

improper emphasis on the wrong part of the story.

I would say this is one of the biggest benefits. So many times you come to a story and as it is told, you know, Jonah and the Whale or Noah's Ark or whatever, the emphasis gets put in the wrong place. And when you have a structure like this, it helps you focus on what God's point is, not what we think is a really cool feature of the story.

And fourthly, it exalts the Lord by showing He is the master of history. God is responsible ultimately for these authors using these beautiful elements of structure. And He, from the names of characters to the way that He inspires authors to write down this text, He is in it from beginning to end.

And it's one of the ways we know He's there. And fifthly, once the structure is discovered and it is shown to be theologically consistent with the rest of Scripture, the structure becomes a source of truth in and of itself. It's another channel that God talks to us on.

Besides the text telling us a thing, the center or what's at the edge. We might have thought that what is at the edge is the most important thing. The structure tells us God's putting the emphasis on this thing in the middle.

So the reader can discover truth not only through structure, but also in structure. And that's the one part of Dr. Grant's comment that is worth writing down. The reader can discover truth.

All those preceding things are elements and aspects and perspectives on truth. But the reader can discover truth not only through the structure, here's the central element, here's the big idea, but in the structure. The structure itself is communicating to us.

So as you look at this structure in the book of Ruth, it's really fun because obviously the outside most elements correspond and there is a symmetry. It's like a mirror. Have you ever seen where somebody stands and they put a mirror halfway down and the other side of their face shows up and they don't quite look like themselves? Because we are just ever so slightly asymmetrical.

And if you do it either photographically or with a mirror, you do perfect symmetry, it looks funny. And if you are used to looking at yourself in the mirror and then you see yourself in pictures and you've got kind of a lopsided face, you say, wow, I always thought I had that scar on this side of my face and it turns out it's over here. Oh no, it isn't.

Anyway, symmetry is something that we respond to and it helps us remember things. So if you look at A up here, Naomi is too old to conceive. Well, you remember that by the time we get to chapter 4 and Ruth is married Boaz and she has her son, all of the people in the town are saying, Naomi has a son.

It says it in the scripture, Naomi has a son. Now Naomi has just spent four or five verses telling her daughter-in-law all the reasons why she can't have a son. You remember our study in

Corinthians on Sunday morning? There is the wisdom of men and then there is the wisdom of God.

And even God's foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of men. And it pleases God to take the foolish things to confound the wise and to take the weak things and show that He is God and that faith in Him is always vindicated and always justified. And Naomi, for all of the struggle she is going through in this very understandably difficult situation, never really loses her faith.

She knows God is in Israel. She moves toward God and because of that she is going to be blessed. So look at that outside element.

Naomi can't have a son, but by the end of the book, Naomi has a son. Just inside that, a certain man of Bethlehem Judah. And where is the Redeemer going to come from? The Redeemer capital R, Bethlehem Judah.

So the town of redemption is... Well let me just finish my thought before I lose it. But the Redeemer was introduced in chapter 2 verse 1, where not only do you have the town introduced in 1.1, but there is a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech, his name was Boaz. And he is introduced at the beginning of chapter 2 and of course he comes into full recognition in chapter 4 verses 14-16.

So as you look at this diagram, and those of you with lights may have a chance to do so here in the next few minutes. Just look at each of those elements and its correspondence and see how beautiful the structure and the symmetry here is. So when they came to Bethlehem, this as I said is very significant.

Why? What is the preceding book? We talked about this last week in the introduction. It's the book of Judges, right? The last two episodes in the book of Judges are contained in chapters 19-21. There are two big episodes.

If you remember this, and it's a gory story and a lot of people don't revisit it and a lot of people don't even know about it if they don't have a real exhaustive journey through the Old Testament. But chapter 19 of Judges is really a sad story. It ties back to Lot and the Sodomites and so on.

But in chapter 19 of Judges, it came to pass in those days there was no king in Israel. There was a certain Levite staying in the remote mountains of Ephraim. He took to himself a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah.

And the whole rest of the story of this man who is going to go north and has this concubine and ends up spending the night on the journey. In verse 11, they were near Jebus and the day was far spent. The servant said to his master, let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it.

But his master said, we will not turn aside here to a city of foreigners who are not of the

children of Israel. We will go on to Gibeah. So he goes on to spend the night in Gibeah in Ramah.

And when they get there, long story short, the perverts attack. The man takes his concubine from Bethlehem, puts her outside the door. She is attacked and so badly injured that she dies.

And in verse 29, when he entered the house, he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces limb by limb and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel. This is a helpless sacrifice from Judah, from Bethlehem in Judah, divided into twelve pieces and sent through the nation. Does that foreshadow anything at all? Of course it does.

But it is one of the last two episodes in the book of Judges. Bethlehem is strongly tied there and really the central character who ends up being the concubine is from Bethlehem. Then you have in the aftermath of that, the people in Gibeah, this is Benjamin, right? Gibeah in Benjamin.

And it is these Benjamites who are responsible for the assault and the death of the concubine. And so the Benjamites kill the girl from Bethlehem in Judah. What is going to happen in the days of David's anointing and the kingship of Saul? What tribe is Saul from? Benjamin.

Where is David from? Bethlehem in Judah. And what is Saul trying to do to David for years? Kill him. Benjamites attacking the person from Bethlehem.

That is chapter 19 and 20. But now you will see that there is also an earlier episode in chapter 18 that preceded that one. That 19-21 is the second of two episodes that close the book of Judges.

Turn back to Judges 18. In those days there was no king in Israel and in those days the tribe of the Danites were seeking an inheritance to dwell in. So they send five men of the family and they go down and they search and they say, they went to the mountains of Ephraim to the house of Micah and lodged there.

Verse 3, Judges 18, 3. While they were at the house of Micah they recognized the voice of a young Levite. They turned aside and said, who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? He said, this and this Micah did for me. He hired me and I have become his priest.

And they said, please inquire of God that we may know whether we journey prosperously or not. So this priest that Micah has brought up as far as the mountains of Ephraim is now the target of interest for these Danites. And he says, go in peace.

Verse 6, the Lord be with you. So they went to Laish and they spied out the land and as you read through this chapter, verse 14, now I think we have lost our connection. The five men who had gone to spy out the country of Lachish answered and said to their brethren, do you know there in these houses an ephod household idols, a carved image, a molded image? Consider what to do.

The upshot of it is this priest that is involved in that story is also from Bethlehem in Judah. And so these last two episodes in Judges are Bethlehem stories. The priest tangled up with Micah in Ephraim and ultimately with the Danites.

The point is he's from Bethlehem in Judah. The concubine in the last three chapters, she's from Bethlehem in Judah. And in each of these cases you see the influence of evil and the problems of sin and of self-centeredness and of corruption and of the downward trend of human nature manifest.

The ending of the book of Judges is really depressing. The only thing that even compares to that last three chapters is Genesis 19 when you get to Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. But those are both, interestingly, Bethlehem related.

And so when we come back to Ruth and we see that they left Bethlehem, went to Moab, and now they're returning to Bethlehem, we have the opportunity for a redemption story in Bethlehem. Bethlehem hasn't been a town of happiness with this corrupted priest and this assassinated concubine, but now we're returning to Bethlehem. And somebody that had just finished Judges would say, Bethlehem, well can any good thing come out of Bethlehem? And yet it's going to.

So as you look at this chiastic structure here, one of the things we know about a chiasm, and we've seen them in many places in Scripture, remember the entire book of Isaiah is so beautiful structurally. In our English Bible it's so significant, perhaps coincidentally, although I don't think so. But the first 39 chapters of Isaiah are the story of falling short of the glory of God and the standards of the law and the judgment of God and the condemnation of God that is a result.

And then beginning in chapter 40 and going through chapter 66 of Isaiah, comfort ye my people. There is hope and there is prospect and you have all of these messianic hopeful promises in 40-66 and it corresponds to the 39 books of the Old Testament, the 39 chapters, and then the 27 books of the New Testament in chapter 40-66. And so it mirrors the entire Bible in that sense.

But also the entire book of Isaiah is one gigantic chiasm. And when we did Isaiah I gave you that full page, beautiful chiastic structure. But we know from these and others, what is the most important element? What does a chiasm help us do? In the first case it shows us all of the symmetrical elements and they're interesting in themselves, but at the center is the heart of it.

And this is going to be at the beginning of chapter 3. And this is after Ruth's experience in the fields of Boaz and it turns into, because now Naomi, for the first time since she went to Moab, chapter 3 is where Naomi, through Ruth, begins to have hope again. Chapter 3 verses 1-8, Naomi says, My daughter, I've got a plan that it will be well with you. This Boaz is more than what you think he is.

He is the hope for you and for me, essentially. So there's a turning point right in the middle of

the book and what God is focusing our attention on is this Naomi who has clung to her faith tenaciously through very difficult times and even her own being put out with God, if you will. The Lord's hand has been against me.

But she still did the right thing. She came back to the land and because of that, because of that, Jesus said, if you've got faith like a grain of mustard seed, God can turn that into a field of grain. And you can move mountains.

You can uproot trees and cast them into the sea, which is kind of two opposite things. We used to have trees in our front yard and the roots would come up and the knuckles would hit the lawnmower and bend the blades and sometimes you want to uproot a tree and cast it into the sea. And I think Jesus said mulberry tree and we had a mulberry and that thing would rain mulberries down and stain our cars and couldn't hang clothes on a line underneath it because of all these staining mulberries coming down.

The Native Americans used to use those to dye their clothing. But the point being that just the smallest faith, God will honor it. And Naomi never loses her perspective on the God of Israel.

There may be troubled seas in her personal relationship with God, but she doesn't forsake him. She doesn't give up on him. She doesn't repudiate him.

She doesn't deny him. She doesn't forget about him. She doesn't stay in Moab and make the best of it.

She goes back to the land where God is at work. And because of that, by chapter 3, through Ruth, she has hope. Now, why is this the center of the Chiasm? You say, well, that's a wonderful personal truth to hold on to and to reflect upon.

But think about this. Naomi is from where? Israel. Ruth is from where? Moab.

Who is the Jew and who is the Gentile? Naomi is God's people. Ruth is the outsider. But who gets redeemed? Ruth or Naomi? The Redeemer redeems who? Ruth.

It is Ruth that is legitimized through marriage to Boaz, and through Ruth's legitimization, Naomi is restored. What is going to happen because Christ has redeemed his church? Israel is going to be redeemed and raised. It is through Christ's work on the cross that all of us are restored, but it is first to the church.

Boaz marries Ruth, then Naomi has a son. The Lord Jesus first has his church. That's us.

That's now. And when the Lord Jesus returns and raises Israel, now Naomi has a son. And Israel will go back to the land, but not until the Lord redeems his church.

So what a beautiful picture in the Old Testament of exactly how God's plan and purpose is going to unfold. And as Dr. Grant was talking about how you learn truth not only through the structure, but in the structure, you think about what a privilege we have of living in this age, of

being Gentile believers, of fulfilling the Ruth role in relationship to God and our redemption. And Paul talks about this in Romans.

Remember in Romans? And he says, God has broken off the branches so that he can graft others in. And if you're faithless, he can snap you off like he did them, but if he grafted you in, he can graft them back in. But it is through what God is doing for the Gentiles that God is making his redemption.

And you see the structure in Ruth, and you see the structure in history of how God has – I used to wonder, is this whole dispensational thing, and well, we're not Israel, we're the church, but Israel's coming back, and it gets really complex. This simplifies it, doesn't it? God is using Boaz to redeem Ruth, and through that, Naomi is restored. That's the big idea.

And in that, ultimately, you have the Lord Jesus Christ glorified in the same way that you have the roots of King David, you have the roots of the Lord Jesus as the King, capital K. So that's kind of where we're going. When we resume next time, we'll take a look at chapter 1, and you'll see below here, I've got another chiastic structure for chapter 1. And as we conclude the chapter and begin chapter 2 next time, we will take a look at that symmetry and find the big idea at the center of that chiasm. But this is a good place for us to stop for tonight and close in the dimness of light such as they might have enjoyed in the days of the Apostle Paul when the guy fell out the window.

Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for this wonderful portion of it and how meaningful it is to us and how it lives and breathes and reminds us of the hope that we have in the Lord Jesus, the purpose that You have for every day of our lives, the relationships that we have, the benefits of trusting You even when we can't see the way, we can't see the logic, we can't see the means, but we see You through the Lord Jesus and we know that we are secure in Him and through Him we are secure in You.

We pray that as we reflect on these things, God the Holy Spirit will encourage us and motivate us and help us to see how we can reflect Your glory and be a blessing to others in the time that remains to us in this life. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.