

Ruth 18-03-01

This is Thursday, the 1st of March, 2018. We continue our study tonight in the Book of Ruth. We'll be resuming in Chapter 2. Let's take a moment, as is our custom, to focus our attention, dedicate our time and our fellowship to the glory of the Lord Jesus and to the pleasure of God the Father, and ask His blessing on us through His Holy Spirit as we study this portion of His Word together.

Father, we thank You for this wonderful spiritual food from Your Word, of which we are about to partake. We ask Your blessing on it. We pray that Your Holy Spirit will find us ready and humble listeners, that we can profit from it, that we can be rebuked and corrected and instructed, and as a result, be more motivated and see more clearly the goals that You have put before us, and that we can make those living sacrifices that are holy and acceptable in Your sight.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. Well, there is a phrase that came to my mind as I was preparing the lesson this past week, and it is a Yogi Berra-ism that you've heard me repeat many times, and I got to wondering, did Yogi Berra really say this or not? There are a lot of things that are attributed to him, and in fact, he even famously said, I didn't say half of what I said, but the one I'm thinking of tonight is, you can observe a lot by watching. And I know he said that when he even used it as part of the title for a book on what he had learned during his time with the Yankees.

But I like those. He's got several others, like I usually take a two-hour nap from one to four. You guys go out and pair up in threes.

You wouldn't have won if we'd beaten you, was one. You'd better cut the pizza in four pieces because I'm not hungry enough to eat six. Congratulations.

I knew my record would stand until it was broken. It gets late early out here. Why buy good luggage? You only use it when you travel.

And then so on. He just passed away. He lived to be 90.

I think he just passed away a couple years ago, but he had a good feel for truth. The last one I'll give you is, it was impossible to get a conversation going. Everybody was talking too much.

But it reminds me, as we look at this text of Ruth, how much you can learn just by paying attention to detail. And we began to look at the importance of Bethlehem toward the close of our last lesson a week ago as Ruth and Naomi approached Bethlehem in verse 19 of chapter 1. It had been introduced in verse 1 of that chapter, a certain man of Bethlehem, Judah, went to dwell in Moab, and now they are returning. Now if you have your chiasm chart there, and the lower part of it there is, I started to say the lower half, but that reminds me of another Yogi Bearism.

He said baseball is 90% hard work and the rest of it and the other half is talent or something like that. So it's not really half, but the bottom third maybe of your chart is the chiasmic structure of chapter 1. We know from our past experience with this structure that each of the labeled elements, A and A prime, B and B prime, are symmetrical. They correspond to one another, and they bracket and draw our attention to the center.

Now we don't typically see this structure when we're looking at the text, and we have to remember that in the ancient Near East, people were much more attuned to material that they heard verbally. They didn't typically read. They didn't typically have a text before them.

They were storytellers, and therefore they were story listeners, and their minds processed stories differently than we do. It processed narratives differently. They would remember.

The only equivalent I can really give is if you watch movies today, you store plot points. You'll see somebody walking out the door, and they drop their key just before the door closes. Well, you don't know the significance of that now, but you file that away, and later on it turns out that they need that key desperately.

We remember that they dropped it when they went out the door. We've stored that plot point away, and we know that it was shown to us for a reason. I saw one Clint Eastwood movie one time where a crime happened, and they were trying to cover it up.

They put the murder weapon in a baggie, and then in their haste to leave, because they heard somebody coming, the baggie got knocked off and fell under the bed, and the people leaving in a hurry missed it. Then when they came back to get it, well, Clint Eastwood had it, because he had been hidden away and saw the crime. But we saw that baggie fall, and we thought, this is going to be important later.

Well, the reason these chiasms work for us is we can chart them out like this and say, wow, looky there. But in the ancient world, they did the same thing mentally. Just because of their training and their culture and not having the written word, they were exponentially better than we are at storing this kind of thing mentally and coming back to it.

They would say, well, I see the step-by-step development of the plot here. And when you got to the center and then you started coming back out, they would say, oh, there's a symmetry. Oh, there's a symmetry.

And they would recognize. And so for them, looking at a chiasm like this not only focused on the center, but each of the points in the second half resonated because it matched what they had stored away out of the path in. It's like going into a hallway and looking at the paintings on one side and then coming back out and looking at the paintings on the other side and realizing that they are across from each other for a reason.

Here is the husband and here is the wife, or here's the president and here's the vice president. And you go all the way down looking at the presidents and you come back out and you say, oh,

of course, this guy goes with that and this goes with that. So these structures are important.

So look now at the one for chapter one. We had the famine. We had the emigration from.

And this, by the way, is a good way to learn the difference between emigration and immigration. Emigrate is to leave. Emigrate is to come in.

And if you just remember, ek is out and n is in. Then emigration is out. Immigration is in.

So they emigrate from Bethlehem. They leave it. Naomi is introduced.

Her name means pleasant. They leave Moab for Bethlehem. Naomi makes this speech.

When it's time for her to return, she decides she's going to go back. She kisses Orpah and Ruth goodbye. They all weep loudly.

Then at the center, Naomi has this four verse speech or three verse speech, I guess, where she talks about how you can't wait for me. Can I possibly have a son? I can't. Even if I did, could you wait? No, you can't.

Our relationship no longer has a tangible basis. So you need to go back. And so then they all weep loudly again.

And then you see Orpah kissing Naomi goodbye. Then Ruth makes a speech which corresponds to Naomi's speech. Naomi's is all about the reasons why I've got to go back and you shouldn't come with me.

Ruth's is all about why, well, if you're going, I'm coming with you. And it is a compliment to that one. Then entering Bethlehem from Moab and in verses 20 and 21, when the people greet them and they're excited because of them, is this Naomi? She says, do not call me Naomi, pleasantness, call me Marah, bitter.

And you'll remember that there is a Marah Springs way back when Moses was leading the children of Israel and they came to the bitter springs and it had that name, Marah, bitter. And that is lined up with the introduction of Naomi at the beginning of the chapter. And they return in verse 22, which is where we left off last time, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab.

And this goes back, and this is one place we've seen in Corinthians where I would have divided the chapters differently when you get to chapter four. But here the chapter divisions really make a lot of sense. And whoever did this in ancient times understood Hebrew, understood this symmetry and broke the chapters right where they belong.

This is a wonderful place to start a new chapter. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest. Now, this is hugely significant.

And you'll forgive me if I repeat because I have, I probably have said this before, but I have the lesson in my mind. I have it all mapped out. I know what I'm going to say, but afterwards, I can't remember how much of it actually came out in my mouth and how much of it I had in my mind.

And I've gone back and listened sometimes and realized that I skipped things that I thought I said, because they were so clear and vivid in my mind. I was sure I said them and I go back and listened and it never came out. So let me just talk about this last and most significant little bit here.

Remember how significant it was at the very beginning of the chapter in the days when the judges ruled? Hugely significant. It sets the stage for this whole thing, because in the days when the judges ruled, it was an awful time. Men did what was right in their own eyes.

You had those Benjamite stories and we talked about the relationship between Bethlehem and Benjamin. The first time Bethlehem is really mentioned in the Bible is when? When his mother, Rachel, is giving birth to Benjamin, she dies. Where? Just outside Bethlehem.

So Bethlehem is associated with the birth of Benjamin and the death of Rachel. And the death of Rachel is a crushing episode for Jacob. She's the one he worked 14 years to get, right? She's the one that suffered while her sister, actually her sister, I don't know what you'd call her, she's not a sister-in-law, while her, well, it was her sister, but also, I don't know what you call somebody, what do they call them, sister-wives or something like that? The polygamous people? Started to say polyglot, but that's a different thing.

Yeah, the polygamous people. Anyway, while her sister is having all these kids and then the handmaids are having children, and then she finally has Joseph and then she has Benjamin. And Joseph, of course, is going to seem to be dead, but live to deliver his family, his clan, and ultimately be the means by which there is a nation of Israel.

Benjamin, on the other hand, is going to found a tribe that is going to result in King Saul. And the Benjamites that we saw in the last several chapters of Judges, who are the left-handed warriors that do all kinds of nefarious things and you have the story of the concubine and you have the story of the priest that winds up setting up the idols and Dan. It's a horrible thing.

So, Benjamin ends up as a tribe that is a source of disdain for the region where they dwell, and it is near Bethlehem. So, Bethlehem is kind of looked down on for that reason. And remember that David from Bethlehem is going to be persecuted right unto death by King Saul, who is the Benjamite.

And yet his son Jonathan is also a Benjamite, and he's David's best friend. And he's going to die out of loyalty to his father, and that is going to pave the way in God's plan and purpose for David to become king without serious competition from the line of Saul. Well, here's the thing.

In the same way that that was so important at the beginning of the chapter, the time of the

barley harvest is extremely important at the end. You begin in the days of the Judges and there is a famine. You end in the land and it is the time of the barley harvest.

Now, just to back up and see the big picture in terms of our interest in this story, and you can look at it from all different points of view and it's fascinating, but we live in the church age and this story has special meaning for us in a number of ways. One of those ways is dispensational, if you will. Here's why.

It is the time of the barley harvest. When is the barley harvest in Israel? In order to harvest, you have to have first planted, right? And we think, well, you plant in the spring and you harvest in the late summer or early fall, right? It's not how it works in Israel. They're a Mediterranean area and barley was planted in the fall and harvested in the spring.

The barley harvest is where you get your feast of firstfruits. That's the beginning of the barley harvest and it continues for about seven weeks. Now, with your knowledge of the feast schedule of Israel, what happens seven weeks after firstfruits, specifically 50 days after firstfruits? Pentecost.

Very good. Pentagram, five sides. Pentecost, 50 days after the feast of firstfruits.

So now the barley harvest has just begun when they come back to the land. Everything that's going to happen in chapter two with the gleaning and Boaz looking out for Ruth and all the things that you know are coming up, this is during the time of the barley harvest. They arrive at the time of the firstfruits.

This is going to finish up at the harvest floor with the big celebration, the big harvest floor celebration with Boaz and the cloak and all of that. That's Pentecost, right? So keep in mind, Ruth, the Gentile, is going to end up as the bride of the Redeemer at that time. Are you with me? Is barley harvest important? Hugely important.

It's critical and significant. The barley harvest begins right around the time of Passover, right around the time that the Lord Jesus was crucified. And on the third day, which was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, firstfruits, you have that Sabbath that they had to get him down off of the cross.

And then early in the morning on the first day of the week, which is in the midst of that time of firstfruits, unleavened bread, that's when he comes back. So the second thing I want to look at here before we leave chapter one and enter into chapter two is this. How does Ruth, the Gentile Moabitess, wind up in a position to be in Israel to meet and marry Boaz? Did Boaz go on a business trip to Moab? Did something happen and bring Ruth against her will to Israel? How did she get there? She made the choice.

She chose. And she chose against a lot of factors. She had to leave the land of her birth.

She had to leave the gods of her people and of her family. She had to leave her family. Evidently

her mother is still alive because Naomi said, go back to your mother's house.

She had to decide to forsake all of those things and go to a place she had never been. There's a commentator named Hubbard and he's got a wonderful quote in his commentary that I want to read to you. He says, Ruth's leap of faith even outdid Abraham's.

Now think about that. Talking about Abraham, get thee up from Ur of the Chaldees out of the land, go to a place I will show you. Hubbard says, and I think this is a terrific observation, Ruth's leap of faith even outdid Abraham's.

She acted with no promise in hand, no divine blessing pronounced, without spouse, without possessions, without a supporting retinue. Remember Abraham came out with great possessions and had his brother and his father and all of that stuff when they were on the way and they stopped in Haran. Ruth acted with no promise in hand, no divine blessing pronounced, no spouse, no possessions, no supporting retinue.

She gave up marriage to a man to devote herself to an old woman and in a world dominated by men at that. So when she says, when she invokes the Lord's name in her speech and she says, the Lord do so to me and more also, that harks back to Yahweh language. She uses God's personal name, his covenant name, which harks back to Abraham.

And Hubbard says thematically this allusion to Abraham sets this story in continuity with that one. So a sense of similar destiny hangs over Ruth's story. The audience wonders, may some larger plan emerge from it also.

When getting up out of your kindred and your country and going to a land you have not seen because you believe in God, that is great faith. And he concludes by saying, there is no more radical decision in all the memories of Israel. And actually another guy said that, but I think it's true.

It's unbelievable. But she made this decision on her own, right? Now I'm going somewhere with this observation. So keep that in mind because we have something important here to observe for ourselves.

We've already seen the barley harvest and Pentecost and the picture that is going to be painted in this book that is going to foreshadow the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer. And of course the whole household of Naomi benefits from this. He basically raises the household of Elimelech from the dead by his redemptive act, but he does it with and through Ruth.

And without her, he can't marry Naomi. But because Ruth is present and because she chose to return, Boaz is able to resurrect Naomi's the house of Elimelech. And there are great echoes of this coming in the future with the Lord.

But secondly, as we realize that this is significant to us and we want to pay close attention to detail, I want to give you, and this is a free no charge and not necessarily thematically related,

but observationally it is related. You can learn so much by paying attention to detail. And I want to give you a quick example from the New Testament.

This is something I ran across just this morning and I don't know how I've lived this long and didn't see it. But we're going to talk for just a minute about John the Baptist baptizing Jesus. You remember that story.

He's down there baptizing all Jerusalem comes out. He's baptizing right and left. He's dunking them as quick as they can pass them along.

So that's in John chapter 1. It's in all of the Gospels. It's in Mark. It's in Matthew.

It's in Luke. But I want to look first at Matthew chapter 3. I want to look at Matthew 3, beginning at verse 1. In those days, John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near. Good so far, right? John's down there.

He's the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the Lord. Make his path straight.

He had a camel hair garment, leather belt, ate locusts and honey. Verse 5, people from Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordan flocked to him, baptized in the Jordan, confessing their sins. He saw the Pharisees and Sadducees, Buddha vipers, who warned you to flee the coming wrath.

And he preaches at them. He says in verse 11, I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I'm not worthy to remove his sandals. He himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

I don't even know which version I'm reading here, but you get the drift. His fan is in his hand. He will thoroughly purge the floor, gather the wheat into his barn, burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

It's a harvest motif. Chaff goes into the fire, wheat goes into the barn. Then in verse 13, Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him.

John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of you, and to you come to me. Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. So then, and the King James says, he suffered him.

He granted his request and baptized him, and you've got the rest of that in there. Has it ever bothered you to understand exactly what Jesus meant when he said, Suffer it to be so now, for it is necessary for us to fulfill all righteousness? And how does getting baptized by John fulfill all righteousness? I'm sure that it does. I just don't understand how.

I couldn't figure out, to my own satisfaction at least, does it mean that we should all be Baptists

or make sure we're in some form of belief that says everybody gets dunked? Or, you know, if Jesus says to fulfill all righteousness, I need to be baptized. Well, but John's baptism is not church baptism. You know, there's just all kinds of problems for me with that.

Well, the clouds broke and the sun shone forth this morning, and it's just a matter of observation. So see what you think about this. I'm greatly relieved, and I think now I know why Jesus said this, where I never could figure it out before.

Maybe you've already figured this out. Do you know why Jesus said this? Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us, you and me, John, Jesus says, to fulfill all righteousness. It isn't just that he needs to be baptized.

Jesus maybe could have baptized himself. Maybe Peter could have baptized him. He's going to be the next pope, right? Why can't Peter baptize him? Jesus looks his cousin John in the eye and says, it becomes us.

It's necessary for you and me to fulfill all righteousness. So what is going on? Well, you know this passage probably by heart, but turn to John chapter 1, John's account of the baptism of Jesus. Beginning in verse 19, John 1.19, you've got the, in the beginning was the word and came into his own and all the rest of that in the earlier part.

Pick up in verse 19 of John chapter 1. This is the record of John. I'm going to read the King James. This is the record of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who are you? He confessed and denied not and confessed, I am not the Christ.

They asked him, well, what then? Are you Elijah? He says, I'm not. Are you the prophet? He says, no. They said unto him, who art thou that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? What do you say about yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.

They which were sent were the Pharisees. And they said, why do you baptize if you're not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor that prophet? John answered, saying, I baptize with water, but there stands one among you whom you know not. He it is who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes latch it I'm not worthy to unloose.

These things were done in Beth Barah beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. Now, John says there is one standing among you. And the next day, John sees Jesus, this is verse 29, coming and he says, behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

This is he of whom I said, after me comes a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me, and I knew him not. But in order that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I am come baptizing with water. And John bear record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him, and I knew him not.

Verse 33, now pay close attention here. John said, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like

a dove, and it abode upon him, and I knew him not previous to that. But he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

And I saw and bear record that this is the Son of God. Now, John knew his cousin Yeshua before this time, but he didn't know he was the Son of God. He says, I knew him not as the one who baptizes with the Spirit.

How did John find this out? How did John know that his cousin Yeshua was not just a really great guy, but was in fact the Son of God, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world? How did he come to know that? When he baptized Jesus, he saw the Spirit descend like a dove and remain upon him. That is the moment that John knew that his cousin was the Messiah. Not before.

He says it very plainly here. And what's fascinating is, when you go back and read the Matthew account, go back to Matthew chapter 3, verse 13, Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. We know now that John does not yet know that Jesus is the Messiah when he shows up.

So when John forbids him saying, I have need to be baptized of you, and are you coming to me? He doesn't say this because he knows that Jesus is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He doesn't say this because he knows that he's the Son of God and that he's the one that's going to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Why does John say this? He knows his cousin, Yeshua, and he's an extraordinary individual.

They've known since the age of 12 that he can do theological discussions with the best of them down at the temple. He's an amazing guy, and John says, you're way ahead of me spiritually. If anybody's going to baptize anybody, you should be baptizing me.

But he's not saying it because he knows he's the Son of God. He's saying it because he's the most extraordinary believer he's ever met, and he has a walk with God like nobody he's ever seen. But that's all.

So Jesus says, look, allow this to be so now, for it is necessary for you and me to do this to fulfill all righteousness. What's going to happen at the point that John says, okay, I will? John just thinks, you know, you're a spiritual mentor to me. I'm not a spiritual mentor to you.

If anybody ought to be baptizing anybody, you should be baptizing me. Jesus says, basically, John, just wait. We need to do this to fulfill all righteousness.

John says, okay, I defer to your wisdom on this matter. And John baptizes him immediately when he comes up out of the water. Remember how the accounts say immediately the Spirit descended? John had been told in advance, when you see the Holy Spirit descending, that's the Messiah.

That's the one who baptizes with the Spirit. That's the Son of God. That's the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

So John gets an answer to his question right after he baptizes the Lord, and he realizes, oh, that's why it was necessary. If John had demurred and, oh no, after you, and, you know, been so humble that he wouldn't go ahead and do the baptism, he might never have found this out. God had told him before he ever started baptizing with water.

He says, the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, when I see the Spirit, I will know that that's the one who comes after me, whose shoelace I'm not worthy to unloose. And you can imagine the connection that was made in John's mind when that vision unfolded. And he said, of course.

Of course. Why wouldn't it be? And it is after that, that John then tells the Pharisees, tells the disciples especially, he says, behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. And when he says that, Jesus not only has already been baptized, but he's been gone for 40 days and has been tested by the devil in the wilderness and has returned.

And when you see the story of Andrew and Peter and Philip and Nathanael or Bartolomeo and those that accompany him, then he goes to Galilee and they do the wedding feast at Cana and so on. That, all of that, when you compare the Gospels and watch closely, all of that falls right into line. But John did not know to identify Jesus as the Messiah until the baptism.

And Jesus says, you've got to baptize me or you're not going to get your signal. It may not make sense to you. Suffer it to be so now.

So that just finally, I just finally got those cards in the right order this morning. And I was so excited. I thought, well, I'm just going to shove it into Ruth, whether it fits or not.

So my excuse is, as we pay close attention to the text of Ruth, we're going to find similar things like the barley harvest. Now chapter two. Let's read a little bit of this.

There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz. Now we know, I don't have to save it for a punchline or a surprise at the end.

We know that Boaz as the kinsman redeemer is a wonderful foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus. And so when it says he's a kinsman, of course, Jesus is going to be of the stock of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and Judah. Right? It goes all the way back to the seed of the woman in terms of being related to the whole human race.

But specifically, he is a kinsman, a relative of Naomi's husband. If he's going to raise the household of Elimelech, he's got to be related to Elimelech. And he is.

And so Jesus is first. Remember, I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It's the house of Israel that is in view when God sends the Messiah, but through him, all the world will

be blessed.

And that was the promise to Abraham. So everything is significant here. And by the way, chapter two is also chiasmic.

This is a simple enough chiasm that I didn't need to put it on a chart and try to map it out for you. You can make this in your notes. It's just ABC and then a B prime and an A prime.

So there's just five points in the chiasm. And it's very simple. In the first part of the chapter here, in verse two and three that we're about to read, Ruth is talking to Naomi.

So that's chapter two, verses two and three. This is Ruth and Naomi. And notice how often it says Ruth the Moabitess.

Ruth the Moabitess. Over and over again, it's emphasized her estrangement from everything that is promised to Israel. But verses two and three here, Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, please let me go to the field and glean heads of grain after him in whose sight I may find favor.

She doesn't know who it is, but she's trusting that God is going to guide her to somebody. So Naomi says, go my daughter. And she left and went and gleaned in the field after the Reapers.

Now she happens to come, happens being in quotes, to the field belonging to Boaz who was of the family of Elimelech. So now in verses four through seven, we have Boaz and the Reapers. So in your chiasm for chapter two, point A is Ruth and Naomi.

And this is at the center of verses one through three, right? Ruth and Naomi, they've come to the land. We're given the background information that Boaz is there. There's even a little mini chiasm in one, two, and three, because Boaz is mentioned, Ruth and Naomi talk, and then she goes to the field of Boaz.

So we know that that's significant because Ruth asks Naomi, can I go? And she says, go my daughter. And so she goes. Now four through seven is going to be Boaz and his relationship to the Reapers.

These Reapers are Israelites who hire themselves out, just like we do around here in Rogers County, northeast Oklahoma, bail hay in the summer. You'll get on a hay crew, and you'll go find people that have been growing hay all spring, and you say, hey, how about we cut and bail that for you? And you make your money that way. You hire yourself out, and you get that done.

Sometimes in a good year, you get two cuttings, and you can be on a hay crew and do it for the whole latter part of the summer. So that's what these people do, the Reapers. So verse four, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the Reapers, now notice they're outside Bethlehem, but where does Boaz come from? Why do we have it structured this way? You can observe a lot by watching.

How does verse four begin again? Boaz came from Bethlehem. Where does the Redeemer

come from? Bethlehem. Not only is He from there in terms of birth and family, but in the story, He comes from there.

He moves from there, out here. Comes from Bethlehem. He said to the Reapers, the Lord be with you.

And they answered him, the Lord bless you. Now, did Jesus ever say anything about Reapers, or reaping, or harvests, or fields that were ripe for harvest? Pray the Lord of the harvest that you will send Reapers. Who are those Reapers? Are these the ones in John 112, He came unto His own and His own received Him not? Who are the Reapers? The Reapers are the ones who like the Lord of the harvest.

They like the Master who owns the field. They want to do His work. And He blesses them and they bless Him.

This is a picture of those faithful in Israel who, when they saw the Lord Jesus, they recognized Him and they blessed the day that they saw Him and came to faith in Him. These are your Simeons, and your disciples, and your first generation in the church. These Israelites who recognize the value of the Master, the Lord of the harvest.

The Lord be with you. And they answered Him. Notice, He comes and says, He speaks blessing and peace and they speak it right back.

It is initiation and response. Now, initiation and response is really important for my final point tonight, so don't miss it. Boaz says to his servant in charge of the Reapers, whose young woman is this? The servant who was in charge of the Reapers answered and said, It is the young Moabite woman who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab.

Came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. Boaz has come from Bethlehem. Ruth has come from Moab.

And they quote her, she said, Please let me glean and gather after the Reapers among the sheaves. So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house. So this is Boaz and his conversation with the Reapers.

That's 2, 4 through 7. So that would be your point B, right? Point A, verses 1 through 3. Point B, 4 through 7. Now we're going to get to the center of the chiasm. This is point C. And this is Boaz and Ruth. And this is verses 8 through 14.

8 through 14. Boaz says to Ruth, first words exchanged between them. Ruth has come and put herself in the field, all the way from Moab, against all odds, in great faith, and through relationship with Naomi.

Boaz speaks in verse 8. You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women. Let your eyes be on the field which

they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn.

What did Jesus say on the last great day of the feast? O him who is thirsty, come and drink. So she fell on her face, bowed down to the ground, and said to him, why have I found favor in your eyes that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner? Remember the lady and the discussion about what falls off the table of the children? Seraphim woman. Boaz answered and said to her, it has been fully reported to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law, since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before.

We come to the scriptures that were authored almost exclusively by Israelites, by the Jews. I think Luke-Acts might be our only exception. And Luke is probably a proselyte.

You've come to a people whom you did not know before. The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge. Then she said, let me find favor in your sight, my Lord, for you have comforted me and have spoken kindly to your maidservant, though I am not like one of your maidservants.

Boaz said at mealtime, come here, eat of the bread, dip your piece of bread in the sauce. So she sat beside the reapers, he passed parched grain to her, and she ate and was satisfied and kept some back. So that's Boaz and Ruth.

That's at the center of chapter two. And it is the establishing of relationship between the two. It is the introduction.

It is the mutual appreciation, recognition. Then in verse 15 to 16, now we're going to come back out. You remember in four through seven, Boaz was talking with the reapers.

Well, now he's going to go back and talk to him some more. When she rose to glean, Boaz commanded his young men saying, let her glean even among the sheaths and do not reproach her. Let grain from the bundles fall purposely for her.

Leave it that she may glean and do not rebuke her. So she gleaned in the field until evening and beat out what she had gleaned. And it was about an ephah of barley.

Now we're going to go back and we're going to have our A prime point, 15 through 17 there, corresponded to Boaz and the reapers in four through seven. Now into 18 through 22, we're going to have, remember we first had Ruth and Naomi. Now we're going to have Naomi and Ruth.

So she took it, went to the city. Her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned. She brought out and gave to her what she had kept back after she'd been satisfied.

Her mother-in-law said to her, where have you gleaned today? Where did you work? Blessed be

the one who took notice of you. So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. Now you think about modern day missions where Christian evangelistic efforts have gone in and you have Jews for Jesus and you have messianic Jewish congregations and the good news of the gospel that has evangelized the church has been coming back and there are those religious Jews and cultural Jews who are introduced to the Redeemer because of the gospel going out to the world of the Gentiles and because of its hold and because of its testimony and because of the witness of those who have been transformed and have been blessed through Christ in relationship with God, the original recipients of the good news are often drawn back to him.

And that's what's happening here. You see Naomi and for the first time she starts to have hope. Blessed be the one who took notice of you.

She told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and she said, the man's name with whom I work today is Boaz. And Naomi says, blessed be he of the Lord who has not forsaken his kindness to the living and the dead, to the living and the dead. And she recognizes that he's a blessing to them being alive and she knows his situation already in terms of his ability to honor Elimelech and Malon and Kilion.

This man is a relation of ours, one of our close relatives. Ruth says, he said to me, stay close by my young men until they finished all my harvest. Notice they're in the early part of the harvest and it's going to continue for some weeks.

We're in the midst of that 50-day interval between first fruits and Pentecost. So Naomi says, it's good, my daughter, that you go out with this young woman. The people do not meet you in any other field.

So she stayed close by the young woman of Boaz to glean until the end of the barley harvest and wheat harvest dwelt with her mother-in-law. So what I want to close with real quickly is a mention of one of the current theological winds that has been blowing for the last probably half a dozen years particularly. And that is new Calvinism.

There's neo-Calvinism and there's new Calvinism. And you know, I've been somewhat sensitized to that over the years. Way back when I was a midshipman, I had a long, long conversation with a guy in my company who had convinced himself that Calvinism was the way to go.

I had close friends who had a daughter who met, dated, and ended up marrying a young man who was a Calvinist. His father was an outspoken, published, and professor-type Calvinist. And it wreaked great tension in the family.

And I want to talk for just two minutes from the book of Ruth about that. What did we notice in chapter 1 about the means by which Ruth comes to Israel and ends up in the field of Boaz? Did God send a whirlwind? Did He snatch her up by the hair of the head and drop her in Israel? Did Boaz go and see her and pick her out of Moab and bring her back? What is the view of Ruth

here? Whose choice was it to forsake the land of her birth, the gods of her people, the people themselves, the nation? And you may know that it was extremely important in the ancient world where you're buried. I was thinking about that today.

I read a story, a wonderful story. Billy Graham is going to be buried in a plywood coffin. It's a plywood coffin made by a prisoner in the Angola prison down in Louisiana.

And the Graham family, that used to be the most nefarious, notorious, it's a place where they send lifers, death row. Guys go there and never come out. They're not paroled and they die there.

And so they have a cemetery and they have a guy who does nothing but sit and make coffins. Well, Billy Graham took an interest in that and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Graham family, Ruth and Franklin and the whole family have plowed enormous amounts of effort and attention into the Angola prison. So much so that now there are over 20 Christian congregations in the prison population.

There is a Bible college inside the prison. And there is a man who made all the coffins. He was a lifer and for 31 years he made all the coffins for the inmates who died.

Well, shortly before his death, about two years before his death, in appreciation for the Franklins, he made a coffin for Billy Graham and he made a coffin for Ruth Graham. Well, Ruth Graham died only just a couple of years later and she was buried in the coffin that he made. Billy Graham is going to be, Franklin Graham bought the coffins.

They cost like \$215 each because they're made of plywood. They're padded with a Walmart comforter covered in fabric, but they're made very carefully and meticulously. And so, but anyway, as I was thinking about coffins and thinking, well, gee, I can make my own.

And I looked up the laws in Oklahoma and yes, you can. But so anyway, I digress. It was important in the ancient world where you are buried.

Remember all the attention in Genesis, Machpelah and the attention that Abraham and Isaac and Jacob make to where somebody is buried. It was important. And you remember in the end of Ruth's speech where she says, where you die, there I will die and there will I be buried, right? So she made those decisions.

She made those choices. She chose to put herself in the position where God could bless. But it was her choice first.

She wouldn't be in Boaz's field. She wouldn't be available for Boaz's attention and blessing up to this point if she had not made those choices at the point of hearing about the God of Israel. She had a positive response.

That positive response brought her back to the land of Israel. Now, what brought her to Boaz's

field? You could say, well, I shot an arrow in the air. It landed.

I know not where. There is the providence of God. Once she made that choice, you could easily imagine God made sure she found Boaz's field.

Unbeknownst to herself, he's going to be the kinsman redeemer, right? Now, my last thought tonight, very quickly, is a scripture in Acts. Acts 13.48. This is another mystery solved, if you will. And we saw this when we did the book of Acts, but it's worth reviewing because it ties directly into this.

Acts 13.48. This is a favorite passage for Calvinists. We're talking here about preaching the gospel here. And separate to me Saul and Barnabas for they were sent.

They go to Cyprus in the early part of chapter 13. And Paul and his party set sail from Paphos. They came to Perga and Pamphylia.

This is verse 13. John Mark returns to Jerusalem. They come to Antioch of Pisidia.

They read the Law and the Prophets. And Paul stands up and then he's going to preach. And for most of the rest of this chapter, Paul preaches, pulls out of the Old Testament.

And in verse 43, when the congregation broke up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath, the whole city came together to hear the word of God. When the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy, contradicted, blasphemed, opposed the things spoken by Paul.

Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first. But since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. It's a big turning point in the book of Acts.

It's a turning point in the ministry of Paul, right? And this is actually what he was called to on the Damascus Road. The Lord has commanded us. Now, verse 48.

Here's our passage. When the Gentiles heard this, who heard it? The Gentiles. When they heard it, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Your King James, I think, says as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed. And Calvinist says, see there? They were predestined. They were elect.

The word here that is translated appointed or ordained is tagma. It's tagma. And the T-E-T at the beginning tells you it's a perfect as had been tagma.

What does tagma mean? It's a military word. It means to emplace something. You put it in a particular place.

You emplace an artillery piece so that its range and its deflection are going to accomplish the goal. You put troops. You station them.

You order them. You position them in a particular spot. You arrange things to accomplish your purpose.

That's what it means. It means to arrange, to emplace, to appoint to a particular position, to set something in place. Now, Ruth, by her choice, leaves Moab, comes to Israel, comes to Bethlehem, sticks with Naomi, does her best to supply food for Naomi.

She gleans and keeps a portion back and brings it to Naomi. She does all of these things on her own. She's already decided that the God of Naomi is going to be her God and the land is going to be her land.

And when she says, there will I be buried, that's meaningful. Israel is now my land and Israel's God is now my God. All of that preceded God making sure she got to Boaz's field.

God set her in place to be noticed by Boaz. God put her in place to receive this blessing. God could not have done that if she hadn't chosen to come, if she hadn't chosen to glean, if she hadn't made a series of decisions based on her response to God, she would not have been there to be placed in Boaz's field.

I would submit to you, this is what's going on in Acts 13.48. As many who are in this particular city at this particular time to hear the sound of Paul's voice, they were in place there. They were put in place by God. God knew that they would be responsive, that they were looking for truth, that they were looking for salvation, they were looking for relationship with God.

God put them in place and as many as had been placed there for eternal life, believed. That's why they were there. Maybe their caravan was delayed, maybe somebody got sick, maybe they didn't even expect to be there, but by hook or by crook, by whatever means, God ensured that they came to that place because Paul's only there a short time.

He's not going to be there like in Corinth for two and a half years. He's passing through. But God appointed them.

He set them in place to hear this message and lay hold on eternal life because they were already looking. It isn't a matter of, look at the story of Ruth to see how God works. There's a lot I could say about New Calvinism and its emphasis and its fresh, I like what, if you look it up in Wikipedia, what New Calvinism is, they call it, also known as the Young, Restless, and Reformed movement.

Young, Restless, and Reformed. They're trying to make Calvinism relevant in the modern day. They're trying to take away its hard corners and they have engaged rap artists.

You can read up on it yourself. I'm not going to digress. The point is, God says, you will seek me

and find me when you search for me with all your heart.

That's the pattern in scripture. And as you look at the book of Ruth here, you're going to see that Ruth is blessed and through her, the house of Elimelech is blessed. Through her, the whole nation of Israel is blessed in King David because she begins with the choice to believe, with the choice to trust, with the choice to make God her God and make the people of God her people.

That's where it begins. It does not begin with sovereign ordination unto salvation. If that were the pattern in the Bible, the Ruth story would have a whole different plot.

It's just not there. And these chiasms point that out. It is a matter of seeing the opportunity and choosing to receive it, choosing to exploit it.

You see it in the chiasm for the book. You see it in the chiasm for chapter one. You see it in the chiasm for chapter two.

So we'll continue this wonderful study next time, picking up here in chapter two and hopefully moving into chapter three. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the truth of your word.

Thank you for the wonderful unfolding revelation of your grace and your love for us expressed in the Lord Jesus and the opportunities that we have in him to redeem the time, to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to invest in the eternal future, to shine his lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to be that beacon of hope to people who are looking for answers and looking for the meaning of their life and the meaning of life in general. We pray that your Holy Spirit will illuminate and enlighten us through the things that we've gleaned from your word and that we will be useful servants. We will be faithful and reliable instruments in your hands to accomplish your purpose both now and in the ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.