

Ruth Overview

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're starting a new series today in the Book of Ruth. We've got about four weeks, and by about I mean we've got four, and then if we're not done, we'll just keep going until we are.

But I think it will take about four weeks to go through. Four weeks, four chapters, except it isn't quite that simple, because today my plan is actually to just give an overview and to read the whole book.

We're going to read the whole book of Ruth together, just to get a whole overview of it, and then next week we'll start going through verse by verse in a bit more detail. Now Ruth, obviously some people are new, but we have just been through the Book of Judges, and Ruth is a natural book to look at.

Next, in our English Bibles, as well as in the Greek Bible, the Septuagint, Ruth follows on straight after the Book of Judges, and it fits very, very well.

It's almost like a third appendix at the end of the book, following the roughly 400 years of narrative that we've seen in Judges. In the Book of Judges, if you remember, we had a whole series of Judges, and then that really ended from a narrative perspective around Judges 16 with the death of Samson.

[1 : 2 8] And then after that we had these two wonderful stories, so encouraging. Of course I'm being sarcastic. The stories are these.

There was the appendix about Micah, who was this illegitimate priest. And ultimately the story is about how the tribe of Dan migrated north.

Actually, the tribe of Dan, their tribe, was allocated some land over on the west. But in the end, and actually throughout the Old Testament, we see them up in the far north.

And that's why you end up with this phrase in the Bible quite a lot, from Dan to Beersheba, which means from north all the way to south. How did Dan end up in the north? If you read Joshua, they were over in the left.

Well, that's what that appendix tells you. How did that happen? And then there was the second one, which was about this Levite and his concubine, and how the tribe of Benjamin was almost completely wiped out in the very first civil war in Israel.

[2 : 3 2] So it's a pretty miserable reading. You know, we've read through this and we're like, wow. And then, well, we could carry on. If we carried on with our narrative, what would we read? We would come into 1 Samuel, and we would read about Eli.

And we would read about his wonderful sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who are, well, they're not wonderful. They're lousy. They're corrupt. And then we'd read on about, well, we'd come to Samuel.

But, you know, in those days, the ignorance about God was so great that they try and take the Ark, the Ark of the Covenant, which is the symbol of God's presence, into battle as if God is a good luck charm.

It's a really dark time. But we have this book of Ruth. And that is obviously a live photo from the time there. That is Ruth in the field of bars.

Ha ha. No, it's not. It's a painting. Funny that. But this is just a wonderful, wonderful story. And it will do a few things for us. And that is a point that we'll discuss, actually.

[3 : 38] We're going to read the book. And then we'll say, well, what is this book for? What this whole thing, what does it tell us? But it is like a third appendix.

And one of the things we'll see is, what is God doing in those days? What is God doing in this dark time when there is no king? And everyone's just doing what seems right to them.

Well, actually, God is raising up a king. That's what he's doing. That's the point of the book. And so the book shows us that in this time of great wickedness, there are those who have great integrity.

There are those who are moral. And there is a God who is working. But before we get into it, I wanted to tell you and introduce you to this place.

This is Bethlehem. Bethlehem is where we lay our scene. But what's interesting, and I don't really know how far to go with this, but it was intriguing to me that Bethlehem features in all three of the little appendices.

[4 : 39] It features, it is the place where Micah had a Levite. The first story was about Micah, and he found this Levite.

The Levite was from Bethlehem in Judah. And then the Levite in the next story marries a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah, and that's where he was delayed by his father-in-law.

And then, of course, in this one, in Ruth, again, it's about Bethlehem. And I just thought that was intriguing enough to raise. I don't really know what to do with it other than share that.

But what is Bethlehem? Well, it looks like that. This map might help. Bethlehem is, you can see it just here, it's about five miles to the south of Jerusalem.

The red line there is a probable route that Ruth and Naomi took, which we'll read about in a moment. But that just shows you the lay of the land. It shows you where Moab is there on the east as well.

[5 : 38] Bethlehem is a very ancient town. It was already named and in place in the days of Jacob, so way, way back, hundreds of years before.

And in actual fact, his last son, Benjamin, was born very near there. And if you do remember the story, of course, Rachel died there at the birth of Benjamin.

And Rachel was buried very near to Bethlehem. And according to Moses, there's still a memorial stone to this day. So a very, very ancient city.

And as events unfold, of course, it becomes the city of David. And ultimately, it becomes the city in which Jesus Christ is born. Now, Bethlehem is on the edge of the wilderness of Judea.

We're very, very south here in this map in Israel. And if you go much further south, you end up in the Negev, which literally means wilderness. It is, so it's right on the edge of the desert, quite far south, very Mediterranean climate.

[6 : 47] But it seems that it's actually a very fertile place. It was noted for figs, olives, grapes, all grew in abundance there.

And we read about David, of course, was a shepherd, you know, grazing sheep, lots of green around for the sheep. And I don't know if you remember that there's a story in 2 Samuel 23 when David is king.

And there's this scene where he's pining for water from the well of Bethlehem. Oh, that I had water to drink. So obviously, very, very sweet, lovely water as well. So it seems Bethlehem was a place of abundance indeed.

And of course, what does the name literally mean? It means house of food. Beth is house. Lechem literally means bread, but it really means food in the general sense.

Place of food, cool place to live. Ruth, cool place to live.

[8 : 11] It's one of five scrolls that are part of the Ketuvim, or writings, and judges in a whole separate book. And what was very interesting to me, and very apropos, I thought, is those five scrolls are each read at one of the five feasts in the year.

And it just so happens, as the Lord would have it, that Ruth is read every year on the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Pentecost. When is that? Well, it's actually on Friday. It's actually this coming Friday.

And I thought, huh, that's pretty amazing. And given that, and that was actually where I got the idea, you know what, let's just read it. Let's read the book. And then we'll comment on the whole thing. And just see what we see when we step back.

So we'll do that in just a second. I just have one more bit to say before we get into that. And that is just to make sure we're clear on the scene. Where are we? I've talked about the time of the judges. But I want to zoom right the way back and make sure we're clear on where this fits.

It is a time when the judges judged in Israel. Well, we need to step way back to understand that.

[9 : 19] So, well, the first thing that happened is God created the earth. Right, we got that. Genesis. And we see in the narrative of a history of the world, humankind pretty quickly rebelled.

And God called one man by the name of Abraham and said to him, I'm going to bless the whole of the earth, all families through you. And thus was created the line of Messiah.

And this happened around 2000 BC. I was trying to find a timeline. I didn't get one ready. So you just have to visualize it in your minds. Okay, about 2000 BC or so, that's when Abraham was called.

And then the narrative of the scriptures in Genesis traces to Isaac and Jacob who gets renamed to Israel. Israel has 12 sons who become 12 tribes. But that happens in Egypt.

They go down to Egypt as a family of around 70. And they spend 400 or so years there. And they come out with an army that's 600,000 strong. They come out as a nation, probably well over a million people.

[10 : 23] That's the Exodus and that's around 1450 BC or so. The people of Israel, they come into the promised land. And again, the point of these people is to be God's nation through whom he will bless the whole of the world.

That's the point. And God puts them into the promised land. Moses gives them the law. Keep these instructions. It will go well. And then we saw Joshua's leadership.

The tribes begin to take those 12 tribes. They take the land that's theirs. And things are going great until it doesn't anymore. Because there's no king and there's no leadership.

And as soon as Joshua dies, they fall into sin. And they forget what they're doing. They forget the law. And they really just start following their own thoughts.

And we end up in this bleak time of the judges. And we end up in this cycle of sin. And then there is persecution.

[11 : 24] And in fact, one of the persecutions is people from Moab coming over and fighting against Judah. Good old egg one. It's a dark time.

It's sin. There is judgment. And then there is, they cry out to God. And God will send them a deliverer or a judge. He saves them.

And then they're okay for a time. Maybe a decade. Maybe a couple of decades. And then they're right back into sin again. So it's a pretty miserable read. And then we come to the wonderful book of Ruth.

So, we're going to read it now. So please do turn there. Let's read along together. I'm reading from the New American Standard Bible. 2020 edition.

So if there's any differences, that's probably why. But this is the NASB. So. Ruth and chapter 1. Now it came about in the days when the judges governed that there was a famine in the land.

[12 : 26] And a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to reside in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech. And the name of his wife, Naomi.

And the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. And they entered the land of Moab and remained there. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died and she was left with her two sons.

And they took for themselves Moabite women as wives. The name of the one was Orpah. And the name of the other, Ruth. And they lived there about ten years. And then both Mahlon and Chilion also died.

And the woman was left without her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughter's in-law to return from the land of Moab.

Because she had heard in the land of Moab that the Lord had visited his people by giving them food. So she departed from the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her.

[13 : 33] And they went on the way to return to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

May the Lord grant that you may find a place of rest, each one in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them and they raised their voices and wept.

However, they said to her, No, but we will return with you to your people. But Naomi said, Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may be your husbands?

Return, my daughters. Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I said I have hope, if I were even to have a husband tonight and also give birth to sons, would you therefore wait until they were grown?

Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is much more bitter for me than for you because the hand of the Lord has come out against me. And they raised their voices and wept again.

[14 : 37] And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. And then she said, Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods. Return after your sister-in-law.

But Ruth said, Do not plead with me to leave you or turn back from following you. For where you go, I will go. And where you sleep, I will sleep. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God.

Where you die, I will die. And there I will be buried. May the Lord do so to me. And worse, if anything but death separates me from you.

And when she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her about it. So they both went on until they came to Bethlehem.

And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them. And the women said, Is this Naomi? But she said to them, Do not call me Naomi. Call me Mara.

[15 : 37] For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went away full. But the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi? Since the Lord has testified against me.

And the Almighty has afflicted me. And so Naomi returned. And with her Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab.

And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. Now Naomi had a relative of her husband. A man of great wealth of the family of Elimelech.

Whose name was Boaz. And Ruth, the Moabitess, said to Naomi, Please let me go into the field and glean among the ears of grain, following one in whose eyes I may find favour.

And she said to her, Go, my daughter. So she left and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.

[16 : 37] Now Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, May the Lord be with you. And they said to him, May the Lord bless you. And then Boaz said to his servant, who is in charge of the reapers, Whose young woman is this?

And the servant in charge of the reapers replied, She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab. And she said, Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.

And so she came and has remained from the morning until now. She has been sitting in the house for a little while. Then Boaz said to Ruth, Listen carefully, my daughter.

Do not go and glean in another field. Furthermore, do not go on from this one, but join my young women here. Keep your eyes on the field which they reap and go after them.

Indeed, I have ordered the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw. Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, Why have I found favour in your sight that you should take notice of me since I am a foreigner?

[17 : 48] Boaz replied to her, All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me. And how you left your father and your mother in the land of your birth and came to a people that you did not previously know.

May the Lord reward your work and may your wages be full from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. And then she said, I have found favour in your sight, my Lord, for you have comforted me and indeed spoken kindly to your servants, though I am not like one of your female servants.

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

When she got up to glean, Boaz commanded her servants, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and do not insult her. Also, you are to purposefully slip out for her some grain from the bundles and leave it so that she may glean and do not rebuke her.

And so she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. And she picked it up and went into the city, and her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned.

[19 : 13] She also took some out and gave it to Naomi, what she had left, after she was satisfied. Her mother-in-law then said to her, Where did you glean today, and where did you work?

May he who took notice of you be blessed. So she told her mother-in-law, with whom she had worked, and said, The name of the man with whom I work today is Boaz.

Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, May he be blessed of the Lord, who has not withdrawn his kindness from the living and from the dead. And again Naomi said to her, This man is our relative.

He is one of our redeemers. Then Ruth the Moabitess said, Furthermore, he said to me, You asked to stay close to my servants until they finished all my harvest.

And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Ruth, It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, so that others do not assault you in another field. So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz in order to glean until the end of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, and she lived with her mother-in-law.

[20 : 16] Then her mother-in-law Naomi said to her, My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that it may go well for you?

Now then, Isabel is not our relative, with whose young women you were. Behold, he is a winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight. Wash yourself, therefore, and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes, and go down to the threshing floor, but do not reveal yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

And it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall take notice of the place where he lies, and you shall go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what you should do.

And she said to her, All that you say, I will do. So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law had commanded her.

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

[21 : 23] And it happened in the middle of the night that the man was startled and bent forward, and behold, a woman was lying at his feet. So he said, Who are you? And she answered, I am Ruth, your slave.

Now spread your garment over your slave, for you are a redeemer. Then he said, May you be blessed of the Lord, my daughter. You have shown your last kindness to be better than the first by not going after young men, whether poor or rich.

So now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you whatever you say. For all my people in the city know that you are a woman of excellence. But now, although it is true that I am a redeemer, yet there is also a redeemer more closely related than I.

Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good, let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you as the Lord lives.

Lie down until morning. So she lay at his feet until morning and got up before one person could recognize another, and he said, Do not let it be known that a woman came to the threshing floor.

[22 : 33] Again, he said, Give me the shawl that is on you and hold it. So she held it, and he measured six measures of barley and laid it on her. Then she went into the city.

When she came to her mother-in-law, she said, How did it go, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done for her. She also said, These six measures of barley he gave to me, for he said, Do not go to your mother-in-law empty-handed.

Then she said, Wait, my daughter-in-law, until you know how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest until he has settled it today. Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there, and behold, the Redeemer of whom Boaz spoke was passing by.

So he said, Come over here, friend. Sit down here. And he came over and sat down. And then he took ten men of the elders of the city and said, Sit down here.

So they sat down, and he said to the Redeemer, Naomi, who has returned from the land of Moab, has to sell the plot of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech.

[23 : 40] So I thought that I would inform you, saying, Buy it before those who are sitting here and before the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it. But if not, tell me so that I may know, for there is no one except you to redeem it, and I am after you.

And he said, I will redeem it. Then Boaz said, On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth, the Moabitess, the widow of the deceased, in order to raise up the name of the deceased on the inheritance.

Then the Redeemer said, I cannot redeem it for myself, otherwise I would jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it for yourself. You may have the right of redemption, since I cannot redeem it.

Now there was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter. A man removed his sandal and gave it to another, and this was the way of confirmation in Israel.

So the Redeemer said to Boaz, Buy it for yourself. And he removed his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, You are witnesses today that I have bought from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Machlon.

[25 : 03] Furthermore, I have acquired Ruth, the Moabitess, the widow of Machlon, to be my wife in order to raise up the name of the deceased on his inheritance, so that the name of the deceased will not be eliminated from his brothers or from the court of his birthplace.

You are witnesses today. And all the people who were in the court and the elders said, We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel.

And may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah through the descendants whom the Lord will give you by this young woman.

Now Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife and he had relations with her and the Lord enabled her to conceive and she gave birth to a son. Then the women said to Naomi, Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today and may his name be famous in Israel.

May he also be to you one who restores life and sustains your old age for your daughter-in-law who loves you and is better to you than seven sons have given birth to him.

[26 : 27] Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap and became his nurse, saying, Oh, and the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, A son has been born to Naomi.

And so they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Perez.

Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, and Ram fathered Aminadab, and Aminadab fathered Nashon, and Nashon fathered Salmon, and Salmon fathered Boaz, and Boaz fathered Obed, and Obed fathered Father Jesse, and Jesse fathered David.

Amen. And that is the end of Ruth. Amazing book, I think. So I just want to say one thing real quick, just while it's fresh in our minds, because you'll have noticed that there's no note of who the author is of this book.

There's no, and actually that's true of all the books we've read so far, it's an anonymous book. So who wrote it? When did they write it? Well, we can infer a few things which we've just read.

[27 : 45] So it said at the very beginning it was in the days of judges, and to say that it happened, to say that it happened in the days of the judges, as of course implies, well those days are finished now.

Otherwise you would just say it was in the current days. So we can say safely that this was written after the days of the judges ended. What else?

We saw there was a call back to this old practice of taking off the shoe, which seems quite quaint. But actually we'll talk a little bit more about that in detail.

But the point for today is it was a practice that is no longer practiced at the time of writing. So some time must have passed since those events. Enough time at least for the customs to shift.

So I think we can safely say it happened after the book. It's some time after the book was written. But how far after? Well, the end of the book terminates with David.

[28 : 46] Not Solomon. Not Rehoboam. Or any other king. It's David it ends with. Now, given the prominence of Solomon, 1 Kings 10.23 says of Solomon that he, quote, became greater than all the kings of the earth in wealth and wisdom.

Solomon was an incredibly prominent figure in the ancient, well, ancient world. And so, in my mind, I think that he wouldn't be name-checked in the book is a surprise.

Which is why I'm thinking that it can't have been written after Solomon had reached his peak for sure. So putting it all together, in my mind at least, I think it seems very reasonable to think it was written during David's reign, which would make it around 1000 BC.

Now, that happens to a court quite nicely. The Talmud, which is some traditional Hebrew literature. The Talmud tradition states that it was actually Samuel who wrote it, obviously along with Judges and 1st and 2nd Samuel.

And Samuel anointed David. So that works. That fits around the timing. There are some commentators, if you read around, who will suggest it can't have been Samuel because David's written at the end.

[30 : 11] And I'm like, well, that's weird because Samuel literally anointed David king. There are arguments for a later date, but personally, they all seem bunk to me.

So I'm quite happy to say Samuel wrote it. And why? And I'm also happy because I think it fits with the purpose of the book a little bit.

But I wanted to pause here and open it for discussion, if I may. So we've read the whole thing and I only really want to just so you're not, we're not going to be here forever, right?

We're not going to try and do the whole thing. But I wanted for us to pause and think about what was the purpose? Why was this book written? And I guess we can think about that either from the perspective of the author or we can think about it from the perspective of the Lord God who has written this by the Holy Spirit for us.

So what did we think? Any thoughts on why this was written? This is extra evidence for the line of David, who he's come from, he's come from Abraham, and he joins in the dots between where we've got the genealogies of the child.

[31 : 26] But bear in mind the context is you've only got Old Testament books before it at the time this is written and it's nothing else you've been with. So you don't have Luke back in genealogies.

That's true enough. We're these guys do here, but it's to establish that David is of the line of Abraham and he's of the line of Judah.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I do think that is a key point and it's exactly the kind of thing that Samuel would want us to do. When you read 1 Samuel, we read about Samuel being born, funnily enough, and then we read about him being sent by God to anoint a guy called Saul.

And then of course Saul turns out to be pretty rubbish and God is done with him. And then he is sent to this little place called Bethlehem to this otherwise unknown guy called Jesse and God says anoint one of his sons and why Bethlehem and who's Jesse?

And it seems quite abrupt and there's no continuity other than the book of Ruth. And that's exactly what the book of Ruth does is it provides that continuity from all the way back to Perez and in fact actually the text even references it born to Judah right at the end there.

[32 : 52] So it establishes that whole line which you don't get from Samuel itself. So yeah and I think that is a very very key point. Yeah it does.

So it mentions Rachel and Leah which is the two wives of Jacob. So it does tie it all together. That's a very very key point. Statue of David is really important though because of Saul well Saul is no good but now David is no good because he's gone around with Bathsheba but let's just go get another future.

God is putting his whole he's putting all his money on David so to speak and it's really important to establish why David through the line of Jesse when you think about it Saul was this amazing looking tall handsome I think the perfect king now that Jesse's son is the oldest no I just forgot to do to have a field looking on the animals yeah I mean on that point Saul was a Benjamite and it is interesting to me how in those other two appendices the Benjamite they're shown as the enemy they're almost wiped out and they're shown to be aggressive so there is a contrast I think that Samuel is bringing out this is what Saul's family is like and then here in this book we have David's lineage and you have these beautiful amazing incredible godly people so that's definitely a big part of it what else any other thoughts

I have a few others but it's fine if we I want to make room for thoughts self-sacrifice we gave up comfort to being young I suppose not having children as well would not be considered a great thing in our society and so you had to give up all of our future to follow mother and that's quite a good thing it's definitely a big thing the willingness to set aside what one may wish to do the right thing is a big thing yeah for sure yeah well yeah you spoiled it so here are my four thoughts on the purpose of the book so the first one we've already talked about that establishing the line of

David the lineage of David you know it was absolutely critical for the Messiah the promised one to be able to demonstrate his pedigree if you like all the way back to Abraham and as Tony's pointed out the book of Matthew shows us that and we will look at that a little bit actually at the end of our series because it's quite key to see how that ties together but it was necessary and it was needed and that's actually incidentally why the hope the hope of the Jew today for a future Messiah is a full-on hope because the records are gone they could never if Jesus wasn't the Messiah if the Messiah hasn't come he can't come because records are lost but we have them and Ruth is a key part of that that's the first one the second one is I think it shows that God always has a remnant I think this is something that God is quite keen to show and I think

[36 : 50] Samuel was keen to show this as well even in the very difficult dark days there is always a remnant in 1st Kings 19 the Lord has to minister to Elijah a very despondent Elijah and say look I've still got 7000 people in Israel who haven't turned to idolatry it's not just you mate there is a remnant and that's a theme throughout scripture and I think Ruth shows us that because we could read through Judges Wow everyone is doing what's right in their own eyes well it's most people but it's not everyone actually there's a few like Boaz like Ruth who are not simply doing what's right in their own eyes and it's a joy to see that and I think that's a super encouraging thing the third one I had written down was to show that the Gentiles may also be blessed I said in my little overview that yes

Abraham was called and we're going to make a nation from Abraham but it was for the purpose of blessing the whole world it was never to exclude everybody else it was to create a line through whom all would be blessed and this book reminds us of that very very key point and what we see here is that faith is shown even by a Gentile and I was reminded of a verse in Isaiah 66 2 it says this is the Lord speaking and it's a very just a wonderful verse to the memoriter said this is the one to whom I will look he was humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word and I thought that's beautiful and that's that's Ruth very very humble contrite in spirit and trembles at the word of God I thought that was just a wonderful thing and this book reminds us that that is true do a Gentile alike and then fourthly finally purpose of the book

I think it gives us an illustration of the theme of redemption now this is something that we'll have to talk about in detail I don't know if you were as we were reading through there's a few things you're like what's with the shoe and what do we mean by redemption what do we mean by raising up you know and why is Naomi selling the land and why didn't she do it before she left and there's a whole bunch of things that we'll need to understand but this book gives us an illustration of the concept of redemption and it is the redemption of the land the land of Naomi which will serve for us as a type of Christ's redemption of the world and then there is the redemption of Ruth which serves as a type of Christ's redemption of the bride of Christ the church and I'm hoping to develop those particularly in the last study of the series so then and then the last thing I wanted to do today because we're getting a bit honest just talk about two application points for the book so from the whole of the narrative of the book what are the things that we should take away what should we pray into what should we do different what should challenge our everyday just a couple of things that I want to share a couple of thoughts on this so the first one the application of the book of

Ruth is I want to talk about the fact that God is in control and we should be encouraged by the truth that God is in control we see it in the book we see the providence of God in action it's a book that emphasizes the sovereign working of God and we see God creating and working circumstances working in the background and he knows the outcomes that he wants but he never does it at the expense of people's decisions Elimelech made the decision I'm going to go and live in Moab that was his decision he wasn't thinking gee if I go over there then my sons can get incredible women of faith that's not what he was thinking at all that's what God had in mind however so you know in every Elimelech and Naomi they live in the house of food great place to put down boots let's live in the house of food we'll be wonderfully supplied here we're going to get everything we need actually no the Lord brought about this hardship why did the

Lord bring about this hardship why would he do that well because he was bringing about a deeper greater blessing I love that verse at the end where all the people say to Naomi Ruth is better to you than seven sons I thought wow you know she lost her husband and she lost two sons but the people are like Ruth she's better to you than seven sons and so God knows what is right and sometimes we may suffer and think why would God do this why would God take me through this well Naomi would have been thinking that in those days if we ended reading in Ruth chapter one that's when Naomi was at why would God do this Paul said in 2nd Corinthians 4 17 he says for our momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison it takes faith to live in the light of that and that faith isn't something that we mystically either have or don't have it is simply a choice to say

[42 : 35] I do believe that I do believe that God is in control and that he is working all these things together for good and then choosing to allow that to speak to our fears and worries and our hurts and our wounds so God is in control God is in control of the whole thing and God is in control of the moment by moment as well we read about how Ruth happened to come into the portion of the field belonging to Boaz there is that that idiom that coincidence is not a kosher word God is in control he's in control of all these things and these decisions but Ruth didn't go to Boaz's field deliberately Jeremiah 10 23 Jeremiah says I know Lord that a person's ways sorry a person's way is not in himself nor is it in a person who walks to direct his steps and Solomon reflects on the same thing he says in

Proverbs 16 9 he says the mind of a person plans his way but the Lord directs his steps that common phrase there directs his steps that's what the Lord does for us and our challenge I think and our encouragement is we make our plans you know we plan our ways but we pray we trust the Lord to direct our steps to send us into the right field so to speak and to be listening and praying into what is the spirit prompting me to say and do today you know and I do think and I just imagine what must have been on Ruth's heart you know she was a pauper and we'll talk a bit about gleaning and what that says about her financial status next week but she was a pauper and I can just imagine her going out going I have no idea what's going to happen to me how are they going to look at me gleaning and literally taking food out of their field what are they going to think am I going to get anything

I am sure she was praying Lord and bearing in mind what kind of relationship does she have with the Lord she was an idolater for Moab she may not have known the Lord that long and I guarantee you she was praying Lord if you're there help and we see the Lord directing her steps into the field of bias incredible and then just the third sort of aspect of this that I wanted to try and emphasize a little bit is that there are examples here in the text of explicitly trusting the Lord for an outcome when there is no certainty again so the last one was about how the Lord does direct our steps day by day and this is about how when we don't know how the Lord is going to act we're encouraged to trust that he is in control think about Ruth somehow she knew enough about the

Lord about Yahweh about Naomi's God that the right thing to do was to leave her people and choose a pauper's life returning home was the easy thing to do and from a secular point of view from a career point of view from a family point of view there were excellent reasons to turn back like Orpah did it made a lot of sense no one would have thought that's a dumb idea but she knew that the right thing to do was to trust in the Lord and go with Naomi she had no idea what the outcome was going to be no idea and yet she trusted the Lord and then another example would be Ruth in chapter 3 she followed Naomi's instructions to go to Boaz what's going to happen no idea he could be like get off get away from me no idea what's going to happen I don't know if Boaz is going to accept to marry me and by the way again something

I'll expand on later that was a very very big that was a big financial burden for Boaz he spent a lot of money that day on the field and the family and you know his own that's why the other redeemer didn't buy that's too rich for me that's going to impact on my children what is Boaz going to do it no idea and then of course we've got Boaz himself he went to the city elders is the unnamed redeemer going to do his thing Boaz doesn't know he knows what he feels is right I don't know what the outcome is going to be but I'm going to trust in the Lord so control is a big thing for this book and it's a big point of application for us God is over our hardships and challenges and we're encouraged to pray into them and choose to live faithfully and to let the certain knowledge that it's producing in us an eternal weight of glory far beyond comparison to enable us to choose peace in our hearts God is over our steps we do and should plan our ways but prayerfully trust that the

[47 : 48] Lord will guide us to a glorious end and then God is even over the choices of others working his glorious purposes even over and through their choices so that's God's in control and then the last one is this encouragement for the downcast Ruth has nothing going for her other than her faith she's she's got nothing going for her from a credentials perspective number one she's a woman that immediately unfortunately renders her at a big disadvantage exactly how women were treated back in the late iron age in Israel I don't know there seems to be some debates I mean it seems that Naomi was able to own land because she owns the field but if you look at the text it's very clear that Ruth was little more than a possession to be sold a slave she was a possession of Mahlon who was now being purchased by

Boaz and if you think about this again this unnamed Rodimus quite happy to buy the land but the woman no thanks so Ruth she was a woman she was a widow which is even worse because that meant that she had no income it meant that she had no support but it also meant that she wasn't worth much as a marriage partner either as a widow thirdly she was a pauper gleaning for scraps in the field fourthly she was a Moabitess I'm not going to go into the scandalous origin of the Moabites but if you are interested and you have a strong stomach then you can read Genesis 19 but I think what is pertinent is as I said earlier the Moabites were enemies of Israel they were the enemies just across the Dead Sea and I talked you know Eglon was in Judges chapter 3 I think it was Eglon was coming against Israel fighting them that's in that's only a few generations ago she's an enemy she's a pauper she's a widow she's a woman and she's come from a community of idolaters and with her background she probably knew very very little about Yahweh the God of Israel probably only what

Matalon had taught her so that's Ruth but God saw her and God saw her faith and God saw her commitment to stay with her friend Naomi and I love the way that the book of Ruth just puts Naomi in such a wonderful light and in the end God works in and through her to bring forth Messiah it's an incredible story of God using the downcast and the downtrodden who shows faith it's wonderful to see it's absolutely wonderful and oh wow I have loads more I'm actually going to finish with just one reading because I think that will do for us just to show you this theme 1st Corinthians 1 26 through 31 this is Paul reflecting on the on just the church actually he says for consider your calling brothers and sisters there were not many wise according to the flesh not many mighty not many noble but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong and the insignificant things of the world and the despised

God has chosen the things that are not so that he may nullify the things that are so that no human may boast before God but it is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption so that just as it is written let the one who boasts boast in the Lord we aren't much really as people not particularly wise or clever or smart but that isn't why God calls us into fellowship we're called into fellowship because of Jesus Christ and he will use us and he will use us for wonderful things I'm going to stop there because we're running out of time so let me just pray and then we'll pick it up next week Lord we praise you and thank you for your word we thank you Lord for the book of Ruth

Lord we're so blessed to see how you work in and through men and women who will just show faith we thank you for the example of Naomi and Ruth we thank you Lord God for the example of faith we thank you for Boaz and his sacrificial love that is a great model for us of Jesus Christ Lord we praise you for what we've read today we pray that you would remind us of the fact that you are in control and I pray that you would give us a heart that is filled with peace at the knowledge that you are God and that you are sovereign over all these things and Lord I pray that you would encourage us encourage us when we are feeling weak or worthless or unskilled or ungifted that you can do anything that you are the God of the impossible and you will use those who are committed to you through faith thank you Lord for these things we pray in Jesus name amen