

Ruth 2016 3C

- Let's pick up in our "second story" again within the book of Ruth
 - We're following the story of two widows seeking rest in the land of Israel
 - I've reflected in the past on how the timing references within the story of Ruth were important details in our second story
 - The story of Ruth and Naomi takes place in the time of the judges
 - Which creates a picture for a second story of Israel and the Church
 - The story of Israel and the Church takes place at the end of an age of judgment, and on the verge of a new age of testimony
 - Today we have seen the re-emergence of Israel on the world scene
 - So we know we are living in the very period of history anticipated prophetically by the events of Ruth
 - And there are more clues in the story of Ruth and elsewhere in scripture that reveal God's timeline for restoring Israel
 - Let's begin by remembering a couple of important time references found in earlier chapters
 - First, we learned in 1:22 that Naomi's return to her Land, with Ruth in tow, was at the beginning of the barley harvest
 - And in 2:23 we learned that Ruth worked as Boaz's servant in the field until the end of the harvest
 - In that way, Ruth pictures the Gentile Church working in service to Christ, laboring in His "field," in the world, which is ripe for the harvest
- But the harvest is drawing to a close in the story of Ruth, so what becomes of the Church's work and what comes next for Israel?
 - Before we understand the significance of these sign posts, let's revisit the circumstances of our widows, Ruth and Naomi

- Ruth we know enjoys security and protection because of her new relationship as Boaz's servant
- But Naomi is still searching for what she needs
- She enjoys a measure of protection through Ruth's relationship with Boaz
- But she is still without a husband and therefore lacks true rest
- Naomi's situation is a perfect picture of Israel today regathered in the Middle East
 - Israel is certainly better than they once were in the sense that they have a degree of provision
 - And that provision was made possible by the Lord through the sympathetic support of Christians in the West
- Time does not permit me to recount the political events that led to the modern nation of Israel
 - But suffice to say that the Lord prompted Christians in Britain, France, the United States and elsewhere to support Zionism
 - And even after the nation was formed, many believers have provided financial and political support to Israel
 - And on an individual level, Christians have been used by God to preserve the Jewish people during many periods of persecution both inside Israel and around the world
 - Ruth's support of Naomi while living in the land is a picture of the relationship between the church and Israel in these days
- Nevertheless, like Naomi, Israel isn't secure in their land
 - They possess very little of what was originally granted them by God
 - They are constantly under attack and must defend their land daily
 - They do not have security nor rest in their land
- However in Chapter 3, the relationship between Ruth and Boaz changes dramatically

- At the end of a harvest, the threshing and winnowing begins
 - Remember I described this process as one of violence and separating
 - Stalks of grain are beaten and crushed
 - The seed are separated from the chaff
 - The seeds are collected while the chaff is taken away
- All the while, Ruth is resting at Boaz's feet, while Naomi is alone in her home
- This section of the book of Ruth reveals the plan God has for bringing the Church's work on earth to conclusion
 - It pictures the Church's departure and Her wedding to Her Groom, Christ
 - To understand this picture, we must first notice how the Bible describes the Church's work serving Christ on earth

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

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

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

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

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

- Again, believer are workers, and there are not as many workers as Jesus would prefer

- In other words, the entire Church is offered the opportunity to work for Christ and earn eternal rewards in the field
- Yet surprisingly, few believers take up the opportunity to work in this way leaving the plentiful rewards to a minority
- Then we turn to Matthew 13 to discover that a “harvest” time is the Bible’s metaphor for the end of this age of working for Christ, appropriately enough

[Matt. 13:37](#) And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, [Matt. 13:38](#) and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;

[Matt. 13:39](#) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

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

[Matt. 13:41](#) “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,

[Matt. 13:42](#) and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

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

- Jesus compares the end of our age to the end of a harvest period
 - Notice, however, some of the imagery changes...
 - The field is still the world, but now the seed represents the believers in the world
 - While the stalks of tares represent the unbelievers in the world
 - And most importantly, a harvest pictures the end of this age, Jesus says
- So at the end of this age, the Son of Man will collect all His precious grain from within the field
 - The chaff, the unbelieving world, will be left behind, burned up
 - Just as the chaff collected during the winnowing process is gathered in bundles and burned up
 - But the grain seed will be collected and delivered to the Master

- Putting this together, we come to understand that the harvest in Ruth 3 pictures the end of the Church age
 - So what comes next for the Church and Israel in God's plan? What does the end of the age bring?
 - Well, we can answer that question simply by looking at what happens to the characters in the story of Ruth
 - First, let's examine Ruth and Boaz
 - Ruth came to Boaz, as Naomi instructed, to remind him of his opportunity to act as a kinsman redeemer
 - Even though Naomi was a Jewish widow without a husband, it was Ruth who gained the husband
 - According to the Law, either woman could be redeemed because neither had a husband and neither had sons
 - But Naomi had already been given two sons, yet they amounted to nothing, so it was a squandered opportunity
 - Meanwhile, Ruth was without any sons and was still young enough to produce a son
 - So Boaz could have acted as Naomi's redeemer or he could act as Ruth's redeemer
 - And from the story, it's clear that Naomi decided to forgo her own opportunity to be redeemed in favor of allowing Ruth the opportunity she never had
- These details are a revealing picture of Israel's relationship with their Messiah
 - When Israel's Redeemer made Himself available at His first coming, Israel declined Him
 - Which in turn resulted in Christ redeeming others in place of Israel
 - We see this truth reflected by the parable in Luke 14 of the banquet set out for invited guests, but they declined to join the host

[Luke 14:16](#) But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;
[Luke 14:17](#) and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'

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

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

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

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

[Luke 14:22](#) "And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'

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

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

- Naomi pictures Israel passing over her opportunity to receive a redeemer
 - And in her place, another receives the redemption that could have been hers
 - Just as Ruth, the Gentile church received the Messiah that Israel overlooked
- So then what will come of Israel at the time of harvest? And what's next for the Bride of Christ, the Church?
 - When the harvest comes, Israel will be in her land but lacking rest and security
 - But she is still very insecure, troubled, surrounded by her enemies
 - And most importantly, still without a redeemer, without their Messiah
- Meanwhile, Christ has proposed to His Bride
 - The moment here takes place while Boaz is with his grain, after the harvest is over
 - But Naomi is nowhere in the scene

- And the entire scene takes place in the pitch black of night...
- So let's list the elements found in the description of this scene in Ruth
 - It's night, it's a dark time
 - Naomi is in her land but alone
 - There is violent threshing and separation taking place in the field
 - Boaz is at rest with his grain harvest, the fruit of the field
 - And his bride, Ruth, is resting at his feet in safety
- Now let's look at scripture to find the parallels
 - First the detail of night, darkness, is important
 - Boaz's proposal to Ruth happens in the middle of the night, a period of darkness
 - And the Bible (particularly in the OT) teaches of a period of judgment that must come upon the Earth before the Lord's return
 - And this time of judgment is for Israel
 - And it's commonly associated with darkness
 - In Zephaniah this period of judgment is called the Day of Darkness

Zeph. 1:14 Near is the great day of the Lord,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the Lord!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.

Zeph. 1:15 A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,

Zeph. 1:16 A day of trumpet and battle cry
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.

Zeph. 1:17 I will bring distress on men
 So that they will walk like the blind,
 Because they have sinned against the Lord;
 And their blood will be poured out like dust
 And their flesh like dung.

Zeph. 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold
 Will be able to deliver them
 On the day of the Lord's wrath;
 And all the earth will be devoured
 In the fire of His jealousy,
 For He will make a complete end,
 Indeed a terrifying one,
 Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

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

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

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

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

Jer. 30:5 "For thus says the Lord,
 'I have heard a sound of terror,
 Of dread, and there is no peace.

Jer. 30:6 'Ask now, and see
 If a male can give birth.
 Why do I see every man
 With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?
 And why have all faces turned pale?

Jer. 30:7 'Alas! for that day is great,
There is none like it;
And it is the time of Jacob's distress,
But he will be saved from it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- We read this passage earlier when discussing Israel's return to her land, as pictured by Naomi's return to Israel, in bitterness

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Isaiah asks rhetorically has God ever struck Israel in the way He plans to strike them in this future moment...the answer is no

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

- And in that day, Israel will experience a “threshing” in preparation to be gathered up one by one
- So this coming period of judgment against Israel for their disobedience to the Lord is like a threshing – a beating
 - The One doing the treading and holding the winnowing fork separating the wheat from the chaff is the Lord
 - And this process leads Israel into a glorious future
- Finally, to a third clue, which is Boaz at the base of his pile of grain with Ruth resting at his feet throughout the night
 - While Naomi is in the darkness, alone and exposed, Ruth is in safety with Boaz
 - It’s as if Boaz has gathered up Ruth like he gathered up his precious grain
 - She has received her rest in a husband even as Naomi still seeks rest
- We read earlier in Matthew 13 that Jesus compared the end of the age to a harvest
 - We know that Ruth is a picture of the Church gathered to Christ at the end of the age

- But now we also notice that Ruth spends the entire period of night with Boaz
- So during the period of darkness and gloom appointed for Israel, is a time when the Bride of Christ rests with Her Groom
- This time of judgment we've been describing goes by many names in scripture
 - In addition to the time of Jacob's trouble or the time of darkness, it also goes by another name

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

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

Joel 2:11 The Lord utters His voice before His army;
Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.
The **day of the Lord** is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[1Th. 4:18](#) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

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

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

[1Th. 5:3](#) While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

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

[1Th. 5:5](#) for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

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

- In vs.13-18, Paul revealed to the church that there would be a day when all those in the Church, whether dead or alive, would be resurrected into new bodies and raised to meet Christ in the clouds
 - We commonly call this moment the rapture; when we are united with Jesus permanently
 - Jesus comes for the Church, just as Boaz covered Ruth
 - But Jesus doesn't come back to the Earth because God isn't ready to set up His kingdom yet
 - Jesus has unfinished business with the nation of Israel
 - In Chapter 5 Paul says this coming day of judgment, the day of the Lord, comes like a thief upon the world
 - But in v.5 Paul says the Church is not a part of this darkness, that is the day of the Lord
 - It will not overtake the church because as Paul says in v.9 the Bride of Christ is not appointed to receive that wrath

- So the Church is caught up to be with Jesus prior to the dawning of the dark day
- Just as Ruth was taken in with Boaz during the night when Naomi was left alone and exposed
- So let's end with a summary
 - A dark time is coming for the entire earth
 - It is a time when the Lord brings judgment against Israel for their sins under the Old Covenant
 - The violence of that time is compared to a threshing floor, a severe beating that separates the fruit from the chaff
 - Jesus is the Winnowing collecting His grain, the fruit of the field, and placing it in His barn
 - This time of darkness is called the time of Jacob's troubles, the day of the Lord, but it's also called the Tribulation
 - The threshing of God's judgment has come upon not only the nation of Israel but also against the world as a whole
 - But Ruth will spend that "night" safe at Boaz's feet
 - Which is a picture of the Church raptured and removed from the calamity coming upon the Earth and Israel
 - Finally, that rescue culminates with a proposal and wedding
 - Where Boaz elevated Ruth from maidservant working in His field to a betrothed bride
 - Likewise, the Church will be wed to Christ following our removal from the earth
 - As we are gathered into Heaven, we will hear this in the throne room

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

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

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

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

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