

## Ruth 2B

- I want to bring you back again tonight into our second story, the story within the story of Ruth
  - Within the book of Ruth we read not only of a family in Israel
    - But also a story of a nation, Israel, and her Husband Jehovah
    - This poignant love story of two widows seeking the security of a provider also holds the story of God's love for His chosen people
  - Last night, we learn that Naomi's plight pictured Israel's history
    - Naomi lived in days of sinfulness, and she endured God's judgment against the land in the form of a drought and famine
    - She fled from her land and into the land of her enemies, the Moabites
    - While she was there, her husband left her a widow and her sons died, mathematically leaving 25 percent of the family remaining
  - And this story mirrors Israel's own widowhood, as Isaiah called it
    - The nation was disobedient to their covenant with God
      - And as God promised, He judged them for disobedience by scattering the nation throughout the world, into the lands of their enemies
      - This scattering had the effect of reducing their numbers, bringing them misery and weakness
      - And there they remained for many two millennia
      - A remnant reduced greatly in number from their prior days when they lived in peace and comfort in their land
- Naomi's story begins to change we're told, after about 10 years
  - And as we studied last night, that phrase brings far more meaning than simply an approximate period of time

- With 9 the number of judgment and 10 the number of testimony, we have a statement not only of time, but also of purpose
- The time of judgment for Naomi's family was coming to an end
  - And a time for testifying of the Lord's faithfulness was about to begin
- And with Israel, the parallel was even more striking
  - Israel was scattered for a period of judgment
  - But like Naomi, God promised Israel they would be regathered on a future day
  - And for the past 60 years of history we've been privileged to watch that regathering taking place in Israel
- In a sense, we're living in chapter 1 of Ruth right now, as we watch the family of Israel, the forsaken wife of Jehovah, coming back to their land looking for their rest
- But as Tonya showed us, Naomi prepared to return to her land as a different woman than the one that left ten years earlier
  - Now she is a widow without sons
  - In the days of this story and in the eastern culture, the plight of a woman without a husband or son was one of desperation
    - Woman couldn't own property, generally couldn't earn a living, couldn't testify in court
  - More importantly, the family name was only carried by male heirs
    - So a woman without a husband or a son was in a hopeless condition
    - All land ownership rights in Israel transferred through inheritance according to the tribal family name
    - A widow without sons would lose her claim to the land, lose her support, making her a good candidate for starvation
  - So the family of this woman Naomi was literally at the end of the line

- The end financially, the end socially, the end emotionally
- Her husband is gone and both her sons are gone
  - So she has no hope for bringing herself out of her hopelessness
- You can appreciate the plight of widows from a scene in Luke 7

[Luke 7:11](#) ¶ Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd.

[Luke 7:12](#) Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.

[Luke 7:13](#) When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep."

[Luke 7:14](#) And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"

[Luke 7:15](#) The dead man sat up and began to speak. And *Jesus* gave him back to his mother.

- Jesus' compassion on this woman was primarily out of a recognition of her hopelessness in the face of losing both her husband and her only son
  - His miracle gave her back both her son and her security
- Which helps us understand that Naomi's decision to return to her land is one driven primarily out of a desire for security, for posterity, for someone to deliver from her plight
- Well, what of our widow Israel?
  - Isn't it interesting that throughout the thousands of years when the people of Israel were scattered around the globe,
    - They never ceased to maintain their identity?
    - There is no parallel in all anthropology
  - As a people group, Israel remained distinct though they had no country of their own, and were always living in another's land and culture
    - People groups don't do that
      - They may remain distinct for a few generations, maybe a few hundred years, but not thousands

- Yet Israel has always been visible somewhere in the world, often many places
  - Clearly God has been at work preserving a remnant of Israel ensuring that it would never disappear or become assimilated into the nations where they lived
    - But their distinction was also their source of misery
      - They have remained the most persecuted people throughout the ages since their dispersion in AD 70
      - Their strong identity has caused the nations wherever they lived to strike out against them
  - It would have been so much easier for them to simply blend in and become apart of the culture in which they lived
    - But God never allowed that to happen
- So here we have Israel in her widowhood
  - She is living in the land of her enemies
    - But that land holds no true security or rest
    - Because it's ultimately not home
  - No matter how long the Jewish people live among these other nations, they still long for a day when they will return to their land
    - But without that place of rest and security, they were like a widow in their lack of an inheritance
  - But then in 1948, that changed
    - As in verse 6 when Naomi heard that there was provision again in Israel
    - The Jews the world over awoke in May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1948 to a Jewish state in the world for the first time since AD70.
    - And millions immediately began making plans to return to their home
- But Naomi didn't return alone
  - In tow are two women, Gentiles

- As Tonya explained, one was an unbeliever who wouldn't make the trip
  - But the other, quite inexplicably, attaches herself to Naomi
    - And she is determined to follow Naomi back to her land
- Naomi urges Ruth not to come with her, because it was a hopeless journey for Ruth
  - Consider what Ruth had in store
    - She needed a husband, the security and rest of a protector, just like Naomi
    - But unlike Naomi, Ruth is a Gentile
      - She's leaving her native land where she would be free to remarry anyone
      - And she going to a foreign country where the men are forbidden by law from marrying a Gentile
    - So Ruth's decision to accompany Naomi is a crazy decision
  - In fact, look at Naomi's response to her

[Ruth 1:11](#) ¶ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?"

[Ruth 1:12](#) Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me — even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons —

[Ruth 1:13](#) would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!"

- Naomi asks, sarcastically, why should you follow me?
  - Are you expecting me to have more sons for you to marry?
  - I'm too old for another husband, but even if there was hope
    - Are you going to wait for me to have two more boys, then wait for them to grow up
  - No, you aren't going to get husbands by following me around

- But Ruth's faith isn't in Naomi
  - She says in ver 16 that Naomi's God is her God
- Ruth's attraction to Naomi isn't in what Naomi herself can offer
  - After all, she herself is forsaken and without hope
    - No, it seems to be Naomi's God that has stirred in Ruth an allegiance and loyalty that causes Ruth to attach herself to Naomi
    - In fact, Naomi and her relationship with God is so attractive to Ruth that she is willing to leave behind everything she has and everyone she knows to join herself to Naomi's people
  - This is quite a commitment
    - It's quite a compliment to Naomi, wouldn't you agree
    - [Witness comment or example]
- I wonder if the attachment of Ruth, a Gentile, to Naomi a Jew tells us anything about God's plan for his widowed wife, the nation of Israel?
  - Most certainly it does
  - God knew that his wife, Israel, would depart from Him and chase after other gods
    - In fact, God purposed it so He could turn this period of judgment for Israel into opportunity for another group of people

[Deut. 32:21](#) ` They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God;  
 They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.  
 So I will make them jealous with *those who* are not a people;  
 I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

- God is going to establish a new kind of relationship with a different people, to provoke the Jewish nation to a form of jealousy for what they lack
  - What is this foolish nation?
    - The word for nation in Hebrew is goy
    - It means Gentiles, any non Jew

- God will seek to establish a covenant relationship with Gentiles
  - And this will be a way to provoke jealousy
  - Jealousy for their relationship with God, jealousy for their rest in that relationship
- God set out to create this opportunity among a group that never would have sought it otherwise

[Is. 65:1](#) ¶ "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask *for Me*;  
I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek Me.  
I said, 'Here am I, here am I,'  
To a nation which did not call on My name.

- As you probably guessed, this Gentile nation that will seek after God during the period of Israel's disappointment is the Church, the Body of Christ

[Is. 55:1](#) ¶ "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;  
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.  
Come, buy wine and milk  
Without money and without cost.

[Is. 55:2](#) "Why do you spend money for what is not bread,  
And your wages for what does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good,  
And delight yourself in abundance.

[Is. 55:3](#) "Incline your ear and come to Me.  
Listen, that you may live;  
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
*According to the faithful mercies shown to David.*

[Is. 55:4](#) "Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples,  
A leader and commander for the peoples.

[Is. 55:5](#) "Behold, you will call a nation you do not know,  
And a nation which knows you not will run to you,  
Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel;  
For He has glorified you."

[Is. 55:6](#) ¶ Seek the LORD while He may be found;  
Call upon Him while He is near.

- Isaiah calls out to those who are in need of provision, of security, of rest
  - He says those who have these basic needs can obtain them
    - But without money or cost

- In fact, we're not talking about earthly things at all
  - We're talking about a spiritual thirst and hunger
    - God is offering us something eternal and imperishable
  - In verse 3, He says come closer and I'll explain
    - I will make an everlasting covenant with you
    - According to mercies shone to David
- The reference to David is our clue to cause us to think about the Son of David, the coming Messiah
  - And in verse 4, Isaiah begins to describe that Messiah
    - He will be a witness to the peoples
    - A leader and commander
  - And He will call a nation that the Jews do not know
    - And this nation that doesn't know Israel will run to Israel on account of this leader
    - Because of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel
  - Seek Him while you can
- This is God's plan
  - To turn the Jewish period of judgment outside the land into an opportunity to bring a new group of people into a new covenant
  - In keeping with God's promise to Abraham (all the nations would be blessed)
    - Because a powerful leader and commander calls them with the command to seek the Lord while He is near
- In the same way that Ruth attached herself to Naomi, the Gentiles of the world who heed this call and believe the gospel become attached to Israel
  - But the attachment is spiritual
  - Paul summarizes this relationship in Romans 11

[Rom. 11:11](#) ¶ I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

[Rom. 11:12](#) Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!

- Midway through the chapter, having explained that God has set the Jewish nation aside for a time, he then tells us that by their sin, God made a way available to the Gentile nations
  - But Paul wanted the church to understand that God's plan for Israel's judgment has a beginning and an end
    - Like Naomi's family wandering and suffering in Moab, one day the call to return to a land of security will be heard
    - And Paul says in verse 12, if God could make so much good come of Israel's period of judgment, how much good do you think will come when God is prepared to restore them?
  - Then Paul gets to explaining how we are attached to Israel, as her Gentile family member

[Rom. 11:17](#) ¶ But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,

[Rom. 11:18](#) do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.

- Paul uses the analogy of an olive tree to represent Israel and Gentile nations (not individuals)
  - And the tree was pruned for disobedience, with branches broken off
  - And the God proceeded to graft in unnatural branches
    - Branches that weren't the normal growth of that tree, but God placed them in the olive tree
    - So that these branches receive their nourishment, spiritually speaking, from the Jewish nation
    - We owe our very spiritual life to the Jewish nation

- Think about it
  - God raised up from the Jewish nation the prophets, who gave us God's word
  - He gave His covenants to the Jews
  - He brought His Son into the world through the Jewish line of David
- As Jesus Himself says in John 4:22, salvation is from the Jews
  - So don't be arrogant against the root, the disobedient Israel that is only now beginning to regather to her land
  - Just like Ruth, who in faith and love for God, saw her relationship with this Jewish woman as her lifeline
    - The last one you might expect would cling to Naomi and make a trip back to Israel
- We are that Ruth, attached to Israel by faith looking for a common redeemer
  - As Paul says in Eph

[Eph. 2:11](#) ¶ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands* —

[Eph. 2:12](#) *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

[Eph. 2:13](#) But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[Eph. 2:14](#) For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,

[Eph. 2:15](#) by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace,

[Eph. 2:16](#) and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

- Keep in mind, we're not saying that the Church and Israel are one and the same

- Paul clearly teaches that there is an Israel that remains distinct from the Church, even as some believing Jews are welcomed into the Body of Christ
  - Perhaps some of the best evidence we have of the distinction of Israel and the Church is reflected in the story of Ruth itself
    - Do Ruth and Naomi merge into a single person?
      - Or does Ruth some how replace Naomi in the story, pushing her out of the way?
      - Obviously not
    - Rather there is a spiritual union rooted in a faith and love for the same God
- Accepting this union can be difficult for some, particularly for the Jew
  - Jews have long rejected the possibility that a Gentile could ever share in the promises extended to the Jewish people
    - We see in Ruth tonight how Naomi at first resisted Ruth's desire to follow her home
      - Until Ruth pledged that she would never leave Naomi's side
      - She made a promise with her life that her association would be forever
  - So in ver 18:

[Ruth 1:18](#) When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

- Even the Jewish leaders in the early church struggled with this idea

[Acts 15:6](#) ¶ The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

[Acts 15:7](#) After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

[Acts 15:8](#) "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

[Acts 15:9](#) and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

[Acts 15:13](#) After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me.

[Acts 15:14](#) " Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

[Acts 15:15](#) "With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

[Acts 15:16](#) ` AFTER THESE THINGS I will return,

AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN,

AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS,

AND I WILL RESTORE IT,

[Acts 15:17](#) SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD,

AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,'

[Acts 15:18](#) SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

[Acts 15:19](#) "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,

- And so the partnership between Israel and the Gentile Church was established
  - Jews still under judgment and awaiting someone to redeem them from their wanderings
    - Providing spiritual support to a foolish nation, determined to follow this God that preserves Israel
  - And now the time for their return to the land to meet their redeemer has been appointed by God
    - Just as a future day awaits for Israel to see their redeemer

[Rom. 11:25](#) ¶ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

[Rom. 11:26](#) and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

" THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,  
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

[Rom. 11:27](#) " THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,  
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."

Do you know this commander, this leader who calls you to receive him while He is near?