

Ruth 4B

- If you remember in our first evening, I reflected on how the timing references within the story of Ruth were also important to details of our second story
 - While Ruth's story took place in the time of the judges
 - The second story of Israel and the Church is taking place at the end of an age of judgment
 - And on the brink of a new age of testimony
 - As we watch the re-emergence of Israel on the world scene, we know we are living in that time anticipated prophetically by the events of Ruth
 - But there are more clues to God's timeline for restoring Israel to be found in the story of Ruth and elsewhere in scripture
- Let's begin by remembering a couple of important time references found in earlier chapters
 - First, we learned that Naomi's return to her Land, with Ruth in tow was at the beginning of the barley harvest

[Ruth 1:22](#) ¶ 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 barley harvest.

- And then last night we learned that Ruth remained as Boaz's servant in the field until the end of the harvest

[Ruth 2:23](#) So she stayed close by the maids 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.

- We should also remember that as Ruth is a picture of the Gentile Church working in service to our Master, Christ
 - We are laboring in His field, in the world, where the fields are white for the harvest
 - So here we have a period of time during which the Church is at work serving Christ, working the harvest

- But the harvest is drawing to a close, in the story of Ruth
 - So what of the Church's work? And how does this address the needs of 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 some measure of security and protection because of her new relationship as Boaz's servant
 - But Naomi is still searching for what she needs
 - She is still without a husband is therefore lacks any true security
 - She enjoys a measure of protection since she has returned to her land
 - And she is certainly benefiting from Ruth's relationship with Boaz, at least in terms of a food provision
 - But Naomi's security is far from assured at this point
- In fact, Naomi's situation is a perfect picture of Israel today regathered in the Middle East
 - They are better than they once were, but they are still fighting for every inch of their land
 - And they possess very little of what was originally granted them by God
 - And they are constantly under attack and they are not at all secure, much less resting
 - The time is still between "9" and "10"
 - Between Judgment and Testimony
- Now back in chapter 3, the relationship between Ruth and Boaz changes dramatically
 - At the end of a harvest, the threshing and winnowing begins
 - This is a process of bringing the stalks of grain to the threshing floor and beating them severely to separate the grains of fruit from the chaff

- Then the remains are lifted up into the air so that the wind might blow the lighter chaff away from the heavier fruit that falls back to the threshing floor to be collected
 - This process was usually done at night because in late summer season, the hot dry climate produced little breeze during the day
 - But the breeze would really kick up in the evening
 - Finally subsiding around midnight
- So at night fall, the threshing begins, the beating of the grain
 - Followed by the winnowing
 - Until about midnight, when the work would cease for the night and a large meal would follow
 - Then the workers would remain by their heaps of grain (verse 7) to guard them
 - Naomi knew how the harvest worked and she saw an opportunity for Ruth to approach Boaz on this night and appeal to him to do the right thing
 - Ruth approaches Boaz inviting a proposal for marriage
- This section of the book of Ruth parallels the plan that God has announced for the conclusion of the Church's work on earth and the approaching wedding of the Bride of Christ to her Groom
 - First, let's remember that the time of the Church ministering on earth is often described as a time of harvest
- I've already alluded to Jesus statement in the gospel of John

[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.

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- Or perhaps you remember His comments in Matthew

[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**."

- Even more interestingly, Jesus Himself described the approaching end of this age as an end of the harvest

[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.

- Jesus compares the end of our age to the end of a harvest period
 - Just as we see Ruth's circumstances changing dramatically during the end of the harvest period
 - Likewise, the church's opportunity to serve in Christ's harvest eventually draws to a close
- But how can we know when that harvest is drawing to a close?
 - Elsewhere in Matt, Jesus gives us the chief Biblical timepiece for knowing that the end of the harvest is approaching

[Matt. 24:30](#) "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

[Matt. 24:31](#) "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

[Matt. 24:32](#) ¶ "Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near;

[Matt. 24:33](#) so, you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, *right* at the door.

- The parable of the fig tree is a parable of Israel, as the fig tree is another common symbol for Israel in scripture (olive, grapes and fig trees)

[Hos. 9:10](#) ¶ I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;

I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first *season*.
But they came to Baal-peor and devoted themselves to shame,
 And they became as detestable as that which they loved.

- Let's understand what Jesus is expecting us to learn from the parable
 - He asked us to learn from the parable
- When it's branches are already tender and put forth leaves, you know summer is near
 - And by summer, Jesus is speaking of the coming fruit, the figs that come in summer
- So do you think Jesus wanted us to keep a close watch on the world's fig trees?
 - Obviously not
 - He was using the fig tree as a symbol of Israel
 - You know, when you see a tree that's dormant in winter, it looks dead
 - In fact, you can't really tell the difference between a truly dead tree and a dormant tree
 - The best way is to wait until Spring, and when you see new shoots, you know the tree is living
- So if we carry the analogy through logically, Jesus is saying that a fig tree beginning to re-emerge from it's dormant period is a picture of Israel coming back to life
 - So when the nation of Israel comes back to life, the countdown has begun
 - We're talking about the regathering of Israel in her land
 - The re-emergence of Israel as a nation on the world stage
 - Against all odds, here she is again

- And when we see this fig tree of Israel coming back to life, Jesus says we should know that His return is near
 - He is right at the door
 - Isn't that exciting?
 - For two millennia the Church has longed for His return
 - And for the first time in all that time, the countdown clock that Jesus gave us has finally started
 - How long it runs, we don't know, but friends He is right at the door
 - Is it tomorrow? Next week? Next year? Before the Cubs win the world series?
 - We are the privileged generation that is watching judgment give way to testimony
- So the end of harvest in Ruth 3 pictures the end of the Church age in God's plan
 - But what comes next in God's plan? What does the end of the age bring?
 - Well, let's look at what happens to the characters in the story of Ruth
 - First Ruth and Boaz
 - Ruth came to Boaz, as Naomi instructed, to remind him of his obligations as kinsman redeemer
 - If you remember, I said on night two that it was odd that Boaz marries Ruth, because Naomi was the Jewish widow without a husband
 - But according to the Law, either could be redeemed
 - After all, neither had a husband and neither had sons
 - And since Naomi had already had sons and one had married Ruth,
 - Therefore, Ruth was also eligible to be redeemed by her husband's closest relative

- But since her husband's brother was also dead
 - The closest relative was Boaz
- 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 has evidently decided to forgo her opportunity to be redeemed,
 - This allowing Ruth to appeal to Boaz instead
- And that's how we find ourselves at this moment, when Ruth reminds Boaz's responsibility to redeem his relative's widow in keeping with his earlier promises to protect Ruth
- This is a revealing picture of Israel
 - When Israel's redeemer made Himself available during His first coming, Israel declined Him, leaving Him to seek others in their place
 - Like the parable in Luke 14 of the banquet set out for invited guests, but they declined to join the host
 - So he sent his servants out to find the lame and poor and invited them instead
 - Naomi pictures Israel passing over her opportunity to receive their Messiah as their redeemer
 - And so Ruth, the Gentile church steps in to fill the void
- What about Naomi?
 - As the harvest comes to an end, Naomi is still without a redeemer, without security and rest in her land
 - She's still left out of these events
 - She's not with Ruth and she's not with Boaz
 - She is in her land, yes
 - But Only through an association with Ruth has Naomi seen any really benefit
 - You wonder if Naomi has felt a little jealousy over it

- And may I remind you that this is the same situation for Israel
 - Israel has regained a measure of security in her land
 - But she is still very insecure, very troubled, surrounded by her enemies
 - And most importantly, still without a redeemer, without their Messiah
 - Meanwhile, the Gentile nations are embracing the Lord by the millions and entering into His rest and protection
- So the stage is set in chapter 3 as night falls
 - Ruth and Boaz together rejoicing at the end of the harvest, while Naomi is alone in her land
- So we're watching a drama from the lives of these three people,
 - A drama that God has orchestrated just so to create a picture for you and I
 - And now in chapter 3, we see them acting out two of the most dramatic moments in all human history
 - Pictures of how God's will bring our age to end
 - Where is it?
- To begin, let's list the elements found in the description of this scene
 - It's night, it's a dark time
 - Naomi is in her land but alone
 - There is threshing and winnowing taking place
 - Boaz is with His grain harvest, the fruit of the field
 - And Ruth is resting at his feet in safety
- Now let's look at scripture to find the parallels
 - First the issue of night
 - This time for the proposal of Boaz to Ruth happens in the middle of the night, of darkness

- The Bible talks at great length, particularly in the OT, about a period of judgment that must come upon the Earth before the Lord's return
- A time of judgment is particularly associated with Israel
 - In Zephaniah it's 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.

- But this period of calamity and judgment that God promises will come upon the world, has many names in scripture
- One of the most common names is the time of Jacob's distress or Jacob (Israel's) troubles

[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.

- So here we have a period of judgment called a period of darkness, a period of wrath upon the entire earth
 - A period of judgment and punishment specifically intended with Israel in mind
 - You may remember, a passage I read on the first night describing God's plan to regather Israel into her land?

[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.

- As I first read this passage, you may not have noticed that Ezekiel described not only a regathering but a period of judgment that would follow the regathering
 - And in this period, Israel would be made to pass under the rod
 - Disciplined, in other words
 - In order to bring them into the bond of the covenant
 - To purge the rebels from within the assembly of Israel
- This is the time of Jacob's troubles
 - A period called the day of darkness
- A period of time when the world suffers from God's pouring out of judgment against the nation of Israel
- Clue #2
 - There is threshing and winnowing taking place
 - Threshing is a brutal beating of the grain
 - You can't damage fruit no matter how hard you beat it – so hit it hard

[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."

- John the Baptist describes Jesus as one who carries a winnowing fork and goes to threshing floor to separate the wheat from the chaff

- And that period of judgment we just read about? Isaiah describes this it 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?

- He asked rhetorically, has God ever struck Israel the way He plans to strike them in the future? No.

[Is. 27:8](#) You contended with them by banishing them, by driving them away.
With His fierce wind He has expelled *them* on the day of the east wind.

[Is. 27:9](#) Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven;
And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin:

- The future punishment that Israel can expect is something unlike anything God has done before

When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones;
When Asherim and incense altars will not stand.

[Is. 27:10](#) For the fortified city is isolated,
A homestead forlorn and forsaken like the desert;
There the calf will graze,
And there it will lie down and feed on its branches.

[Is. 27:11](#) When its limbs are dry, they are broken off;
Women come *and* make a fire with them,
For they are not a people of discernment,
Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them.
And their Creator will not be gracious to them.

[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.

[Is. 27:13](#) It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

- So the period of God's judgment against Israel for their disobedience to the covenant is described as a threshing – a beating
 - And the one with the winnowing fork separating the wheat from the chaff is the Lord

- Clue #3
 - Boaz rests with his grain pile, the fruit of the harvest
 - Consider Jesus' words

[Matt. 13:24](#) ¶ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

[Matt. 13:25](#) "But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

[Matt. 13:26](#) "But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

[Matt. 13:27](#) "The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

[Matt. 13:28](#) "And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?'

[Matt. 13:29](#) "But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.

[Matt. 13:30](#) 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

- This parable joins several of the clues together
 - During a time, the kingdom of heaven is seen as a field being sown with seed
 - During this time the enemy and the man have opportunity to sow
 - One produces wheat the other tares
 - The wheat produces fruit, while the tares only look like wheat, but produce no fruit
 - Since they look the same, the man waits until the harvest to reap
 - Because he will see the fruit and know the difference
 - At the time of harvest, the tares are burned and the fruit is gathered into piles in the barn
- Furthermore, Ruth's presence at Boaz's feet is another clue
 - Remember I said that this coming period of judgment had many different names

- One of those names is the Day of the Lord

[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.

[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**.

- Now look at this New Testament reference from Paul's letter to Thessalonica

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

- You may not be familiar with Paul's teaching here, so let me summarize
 - In verses 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 call this moment the rapture, when we are united with Jesus permanently
 - Jesus doesn't come to Earth because God isn't ready to set up His kingdom yet
 - He has unfinished business with the nation of Israel
 - Now did you notice that in chapter 5 Paul then says, now as to the time (of these events), you already know – because Paul had already taught them
 - This coming rapture is connected with the day of the Lord
 - It comes like a thief
 - But this darkness (there's that reference to a dark time)
 - It will not overtake the church
 - We are not appointed to receive that wrath
- So let's take a break and summarize
 - A dark time will ensure on the entire earth
 - It is a time designed to punish Israel for their sins under the Old Covenant
 - It is compared to a threshing floor, a beating to separate the fruit from the chaff
 - Jesus is the winnowing
 - And He collects His grain, the fruit of the field and He carries it away
 - And the Church rests at His feet, raptured before Tribulation

- Finally, what about Ruth's strange proposal and Boaz's response?
 - Remember the setting
 - The harvest is over, the grain has been piled up and the chaff removed
 - The end of the age and the fullness of the Gentiles has come in
 - Night has fallen and the threshing begins
 - The time of Jacob's troubles, the Tribulation, has fallen upon the entire earth
 - And the threshing of God's judgment has come upon the nation of Israel and the world as a whole
 - But Ruth is safe at Boaz's feet
 - The Church raptured and removed from the Earth
 - Now we have a proposal of sorts and an agreement
 - While the threshing takes place, Boaz elevated Ruth from maidservant to betrothed bride
- Likewise, once we, the Church, have been removed from the earth, we will enjoy Christ's presence in the throne room waiting for our return to Earth to reign with Christ

[Rev. 19:1](#) ¶ After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ¶ "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;

[Rev. 19:2](#) BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER."

[Rev. 19:3](#) And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER."

[Rev. 19:4](#) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

[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.

[Rev. 19:9](#) ¶ Then he said to me, “ Write, ‘ Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “ These are true words of God.”

- So the Church and Christ enter into a marriage covenant
 - But remember, God is still not finished with Israel
 - Naomi still needs her redeemer too, her security