

A Famine

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[0:00] Well, you can take your Bibles and open to the book of Ruth.

! Ruth, and we're going to be looking at chapter 1. Ruth chapter 1, we're going to cover that entire chapter tonight. And I'm not going to read it on the front end.

And we'll kind of take it a step at a time as I move through my sermon. And so let me begin this way.

Let me begin with how Ruth begins, or how the book begins. It begins with these words, at least in the New King James. This is how it's translated.

Now it came to pass. Interesting way to start a story. In fact, maybe we could even argue that's a good way to start a story. Maybe it could have been translated this way, once upon a time.

[1:05] And yet, having said that, let's not think that this is some fairy tale. Once upon a time, a prince lived. No, it's not a fairy tale.

This is not some fictitious short story with some spiritual application. This is a true story. This is history. And really, we know that according to what the writer says next.

He says, now it came to pass. And then he says, in the days when the judges ruled. That is historical. That's a point of reference to history.

In the days when the judges ruled. And then he goes on to say, and there was a famine in the land. These are statements of fact. Statements of history.

So, it's not once upon a time. And then you have some little love story that follows. And maybe you can have your hearts warmed by it. And maybe there's some practical application to it.

[2:08] Or whatever. It's more than that. It is a true story. Now, I want to kind of introduce the chapter this way. The first. These first few phrases.

Here in chapter 1. Not all the way through chapter 1. Excuse me. Verse 1. But just the first two or three phrases. They provide for us.

Key information. In fact, I would say to you that. There are here three points. Or three important bits. Of information. That help us understand the book.

Help us and prepare us for all that God is going to teach us through the book. The first two of these three points of information. The first two. We can understand without even reading any further in the book.

We can get it from these first few phrases. Half of verse 1. And we'll know something about the book of Ruth without even reading the rest of it. And these first two points.

[3:10] First of all. The first one would be this. The historical point of reference. Is key to understanding the book. The historical point of reference. And I'll explain this. What is the historical point of reference?

It's the days of the judges. That's what we get right here at the beginning. The days of the judges. And so that one little phrase. That historical point of reference.

Firmly establishes when the story of Ruth took place. And this is important. Ruth's story. Occurred during the times.

Or the days. Of the judges. Now is that important? Well I hope you'll agree that it is. When I explain it. But the historical point of reference. Is key to understanding the book.

This is the days of the judges. You know what those days were. A period of time in Israel's history. That lasted approximately 400 years. Pretty good chunk of their history. The days of the judges.

[4:06] And it occurred in their lives. In their history. After Israel. Came into the promised land. Alright. So that's when this period began. Somewhere in that time. And continued.

Under the leadership of Joshua. Joshua. And then. It extended to the time. Just before. The very first king. So there's the parameter. From the time.

Under Joshua's leadership. In the promised land. To the time. Of the first king. And who was that? That would be Saul. Alright. This is the period.

Of the judges. And we have a book. By that name. Comes right before. The book of Ruth. And it is a kind of a chronicle. Of the events. Or many of the events.

That took place. During that time period. Alright. These are the days of the judges. So. Right off. This very first. Main phrase. After we get past. Once upon a time. This first phrase.

[5:02] Gives us a historical point of reference. For the book of Ruth. The story takes place. During a time. In Israel's history.

Known as the time. Or the days of the judges. Now having said that. That leads us to a second point of information. That's important for us understanding the book.

Since this historical point of reference. Tells us. When the principal characters. In the book of Ruth. Ruth lived. That is. The days of the judges. Then this also provides for us.

Not only. A historical point of reference. But a spiritual point of reference. That's key to understanding the book of Ruth. And not just understanding the story that's being told.

But to understand. It's the significance of the book of Ruth. In all of scripture. And that is the spiritual point of reference. Now let me ask you.

[5:59] What does the historical reference. The days of the judges. Tell us about the spiritual condition of Israel. You don't have to answer that. All we have to do is go back to Judges.

The very last verse of Judges. And we'll know the answer to that. Look at the last verse of Judges. You don't have to go very far. Just go back one verse. Well one book.

But it's one verse. Judges 21.25. What does it say? Makes it pretty clear. The spiritual condition of Israel. In those days there was no king in Israel.

That's the point of reference. Time of the judges. And I think the implication being. Not even God was their king. As he should have been. Should have been a theocracy in those days.

But not even God was king. But they had no king. But the next statement. The final statement of the book of Judges. Is most telling. And what does it say? As they saw fit.

[7:00] In their own eyes. They did what was right in their own eyes. What a statement. About the spiritual condition of Israel. In these days. And all you have to do is go back. And read the book of Judges.

Right? And I'm sure you have. And the one glaring message. That you get from the book of Judges. Is connected to this seemingly.

Endless cycle of sin and deliverance. It's pretty incredible. When you read through the book. I mean you know how it goes. God's people. Rebel. And they sin.

So God. What does he do? Judges them. Through some foreign enemy. God's people. Then under the judgment of God. They cry out. In repentance. And they cry out for mercy.

And what does God do? He shows mercy. And he raises up a judge. To deliver them. That's. That's what we have in the book of Judges. And so the historical reference.

[7:58] There is a famine in the land. Here in Ruth. Seems I think. To place the story of Ruth. During one of those judging times. There's a famine in the land. Here then.

Are two bits of information. That we can glean. About the book of Ruth. The story of Ruth. That we can understand. We can get a hold of.

Even before we read. Any of the rest of the book. You know these two things. About the book of Ruth. The historical point of reference. It's the days of the judges. And because of that.

We know. The spiritual point of reference. That is. They are. In a time of darkness. Spiritual darkness. Now.

The third. The third. Bit of information. That we can get. Then. From this book. Is. One. That we. Begin to understand. As.

[8:51] We read the book. All right. So. These. First two things. We can see. Right off. Just all we have to do. Is read half of one verse. And we see these things. And understand these things. About. The people who lived.

In this period of time. But the third thing. Third. I think very important. Bit of information. We need. Comes. Not only with these. First few phrases.

But also. Gradually. Unfolds. For us. As we read. Through the book. And. Here is how. I would identify it. Again. Connecting it with judges.

Because the writer. Connects it with judges. The book of judges. Represents. Of course. Again. A dark time. For Israel. Wouldn't you agree? Pretty dark time. For them. Rebellion. Judgment. Repentance. Deliverance. Only to rebel again. So. Then it starts all over. Rebellion. Judgment. Repentance. Deliverance.

[9:48] Rebellion again. Judgment. Repentance. Deliverance. On and on and on it goes. Ad nauseum. I mean. It is just. It is over and over. And over again.

Is. Is there any sense in this? I mean. When you. When you begin to think. What. What is this all about? God. We might even ask. God. Your people sin. You judge them. They cry out to you. You forgive them. And give mercy to them. And deliver them. And then they sin again. What's the point of that? What's the point of that? Even. Again. The final verse of the book of Judges. Leaves you wondering about that. When you think about it. I read it a moment ago. In those days there was no king in the land. And everyone did what was right in their own sight.

And that is the end of Judges. That's the end of that story. Now think about it. That's what we're left with. When we finish reading the book of Judges.

[10:44] The seemingly endless cycle of. Again. Rebellion and judgment and repentance and deliverance. It's difficult enough for us to imagine why Israel would continue to rebel.

Considering what God has done for them. And continues to do for them. It's hard enough for us to understand that. Now we really. Really it's not all that hard. Because all we have to do is look at ourselves.

But. But it's difficult maybe to get a hold of that. And you find yourself reading through the book of Judges. And. And wondering about that. What is wrong with these knuckleheads? You know. Look at what God has done. And then they sin again. And so it's hard enough for us to get a hold of that. But it is beyond us. To understand how God could continue to listen to their cries. And then have mercy upon them. That's even more difficult to get a hold of. I mean you would think. That at some point God would say. Well that's just it. I've had enough with you.

[11:45] And just give them up. And so you know. Think about that. That's what we're left with. When we get to the end of Judges. Well. There's an answer to that.

That's why we have the book of Ruth. We have the book of Ruth. Just as an answer to that very dilemma. How could they continue. And continue. This cycle just goes on.

And on. And on. And if we believe the dates. Some 400 years. This is going on. The book of Ruth. Gives us the answer to that. The book of Ruth.

Reveals. What God is up to. In all of this. This is very important. In our understanding. Of the book of Ruth. God. Is not being merciful. To Israel.

Just for mercy's sake. Just because. He's some benevolent deity. That's not it. God is. A merciful God.

[12:43] There's no doubt about that. But he's not showing mercy. To Israel. Over and over again. Just because he is merciful. God has a plan. That he's working.

Throughout the book of Judges. Indeed. Throughout the entire Old Testament. He has a plan. That he's been working. Through all of this. And so. Here is the third bit. Of information. That we. Need to.

Get. From these few phrases. At the opening of the book. And then. As it unfolds. Throughout the book. Here's. Here's what we need to get. The providence. Of God. Is acting.

In complete accord. With his plan. To save. His people. Through his Messiah. It's the big picture. You see. Judges. As a tendency.

To bring us down. To the. The micro. The. The small picture. Of God's people. Sinning. And then.

[13:40] Repenting. And then. Being forgiven. And. And. And. And. On and on. We have. Kind of that small picture. And then. Ruth. If we. Have eyes to see it. Gives us. The big picture.

Why God is merciful. With his people. Why God continues. To deliver them. Even though they sin. And continue to sin. Because. What we have. Here.

Is. The providence. Of God. Working. Through his people. And through history. And so forth. And this providence. And the way he's working. And moving things. Is.

In complete accord. With his. Overall plan. Of redemption. That will. Of course. Culminate. In the New Testament. With the.

Coming of the Messiah. Ruth. Is key. To that. And so. It starts. Then. With. This statement. There is a famine. In the land. A famine.

[14 : 33] In the land. That's. Where. This. This. Is first. Revealed. To this. To us. And then. It begins. To unfold. Before us. As we read. The book. The book. Of Ruth. Is. It's a love story.

Right? Well. It is. It is. One of the most. Beautifully written. Love stories. In the entire Bible. But above that. And supremely. The book.

Of Ruth. Is. A revelation. Of. The testimony. To. The providence. Of God. To bring. About. Historical. Events. In order.

To send. To ultimately. Bring. His Messiah. Into the world. That. Ruth. Answers. That. So. Ruth. Is. The book.

That explains. What God. Was up to. Back there. In the book. Of Judges. And so. He repeatedly. Rescues. And preserves. His people. Israel. Why? Because they are part.

[15 : 25] Of the plan. To redeem. The world. Jews. And Gentiles. You. And me. See. And Ruth. Explains that. Now. How do we know that?

You should remember this from. What I shared last week. But how do we know that's the case? That that's the primary purpose for the book of Ruth? We know that because of the way the book of Ruth ends.

It's not just some little thing tagged on to the end. This genealogy. It's not just something tagged on to the end as some, you know, maybe appendices. Part of the appendices.

It's there for a purpose. It's to give us the ultimate purpose of the book of Ruth. The book of Ruth ends with Ruth and Boaz getting married, having a son named Obed, who had a son named Jesse, who had a son named David, out of whose lineage the Messiah would one day come and for us has come.

That's what we need. In a sense, that's all you really need to know about the book of Ruth. I'm sorry. If you just want to consider it a beautiful love story and a piece of literature, it is much more than that.

[16 : 33] In fact, in comparison to God's real purpose for including Ruth in his inspired word is not to give us a love story.

It is to reveal to us the sovereign providence of God working in history to redeem lost sinners. That's what the book of Ruth is all about.

And Ruth is a representative of a lost sinner who comes to faith. And so we'll get to that. Everything else in the story then, beyond that basic objective, that foundational purpose of the book, everything else is to reveal that and to support that blessed reality of God's providence in redemption.

All right. Now, let's then see the providence of God in the book of Ruth. Would you see how that unfolds? And as I gave you this outline last week, it begins with a famine. That's not where we want his providence to begin.

We certainly wouldn't want his providence in our lives to begin that way. And it's much worse than just simply a famine as you know the story you're going to discover. But it begins with a famine.

[17 : 50] That's chapter one. And then a field. That's chapter two. Then a floor. Boaz threshing floor. That's chapter three. And then finally a family.

All right. So you remember that outline. That's right. A famine. We begin with a famine. And the first thing I want you to consider is, number one, a devastated family. That's what we have here in chapter one.

A famine. And as a result, a devastated. You could even say almost decimated family. In fact, that would be a good word, too. It begins with a D. All right.

So you can put devastated or decimated or whatever word you want to use. All right. So how does this begin? It begins. There was a famine in the land. In what land? Israel.

In Israel. In the land of Israel. And so we're to understand that God then is working his providence through a famine.

[18 : 50] A famine. Not just the famine, but also through the extenuating circumstances. Circumstances of the famine for one particular family.

Elimelech's family. And it's, of course, an extremely sad story, isn't it? Verse 1. Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land.

And then we have the extenuating circumstances. And a certain man of Bethlehem Judah went to dwell in the country of Moab. He and his wife and his sons.

The name of the man was Elimelech. The name of his wife was Naomi. And the names of his two sons were Malon and Kilion. Ephrathites of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem Judah. Ephrathites. We don't really know exactly what that means. It's very likely that it was a reference to a dynasty, kind of a dynasty, a family there in Bethlehem.

[19:51] And so it's quite probable that Elimelech's family were quite well-to-do, quite wealthy. And so they're Ephrathites of Bethlehem Judah.

And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. Now, just from the text itself, it's pretty clear that Elimelech is the one who's made this decision.

And that makes sense. He's the father. He's the head of the household. And he makes the decision. But it's written that way. Went to dwell in the country of Moab.

Who did? This certain man of Bethlehem. We know his name. We're introduced to his name a little bit later. It's Elimelech. And then it's repeated again. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there.

He went there. They went there. So it started with he went there. And they went there. The point is he made the decision. He led his family to leave Israel, their hometown Bethlehem, and to leave everything behind and move to the land of Moab.

[20:57] All right? That was a pretty serious decision. I mean, it really is for Elimelech to make. I mean, with the things that ultimately happened notwithstanding, this is a pretty serious decision, big step that Elimelech is making for himself and for his family.

And he's doing it. Why? To escape the famine. To escape the famine. And so he moves his family to a land where the famine isn't. And that's in Moab.

Now, what about this land of Moab? What about these Moabites? Let me give you a little information about them. Maybe you know some of this. You can read about the origin of the Moabites in Genesis chapter 19.

And it's a pretty sordid story. Very soon after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Of course, you know, Lot and his wife and his family, or his two daughters, are fleeing Sodom.

They're escaping just as the angel was leading them out. And then destruction is coming upon Sodom. And you remember what happened to Lot's wife, of course.

[22:08] She looked back and was turned to a pillar of salt. And so Lot is escaping and he's fleeing with his two daughters. And for a period of time, they live in a cave, according to Scripture.

And then we have something pretty terrible happen. And so, in the last time, the oldest daughter concluded that her father would die without leaving an heir, without the lineage continuing on.

And so she persuaded her sister, the younger daughter, to get her father drunk. So they'd get her drunk, get him drunk. And then they would both sleep with their father so that they could have children and carry on the line.

And it was just totally wrong. And so that's what they did. The oldest daughter went first. And as a result, she had a son and she named him Moab.

Moab. The younger daughter also did the same. And she had a son named Ammon. So out of Moab and Ammon, out of these two sons, born out of an incestual, immoral relationship between the daughters of Lot and Lot, we have the Moabites and the Ammonites coming out.

[23:31] Now, the Moabites are the ones that we're focusing on here. Many years later, after the Israelites had crossed the Jordan River, they're about to enter into the Promised Land.

And they've crossed over the Jordan, you know, just over from Jericho. You know that story. And they are encamped there in the plains, the Bible says the plains of Moab.

They're in the land of the Moabites. And there's a king there of the Moabites. And his name is Balak. Balak. And Balak is terrified of the Israelites.

He is just sure they're going to conquer his people. And so what does he do? He hires the prophet Balaam. Balaam to go out and curse them. Balaam tried to do it, but he couldn't do it.

He can't curse God's people if they are under God's blessings. And so he hatches a plan with Balak. He said, this is what you ought to do. You ought to get your Moabite women to flirt with the Israelite men and to intermarry.

[24:39] And this caused ultimately what Balak wanted originally, and that was God's judgment upon Israel. So, you know, the Moabites don't have a very good history with Israel.

And they don't think very much of them. And, in fact, it doesn't even end there. It goes on into the period of the Judges. And in Judges 3, the Israelites are subject to Eglon, who is king of the

Moabites, subject to him for 18 years.

Long time. And so what kind of history did they have with the Moabites? And, consequently, God judged them, and they could not come into the assembly for 10 decades or 10 generations.

So the Moabites were not a good bunch of people. They were idolaters, and we could go on and on with that. Now, all that said, what happened next to Elimelech's family?

All right, he takes his family, moves them to Moab, and then, of course, we're going to read about it here in a minute. But what happens to him and to his sons and so forth? What happened to them, was that as a result of disobedience?

[25 : 54] They left Israel, went to Moab. Was this judgment upon them? Was it a result of his faithlessness? He just couldn't trust God during this time of famine, and so God is going to judge him for his decision?

Is that the case? Well, if it is, the Bible really doesn't say so. It's pretty silent on the subject. Now, we do have something that Naomi said in verse 21.

She said, I went out full, left, that is, she left, I left Bethlehem full. I don't know if that's a reference to physical plenty or maybe a reference to her husband having a family and so forth.

But she left Bethlehem full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty. And then she said this, why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has testified against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?

Pretty strong. It may be a reference to the reality that all that had happened to them when they went into the land of Moab was part of God's judgment.

[27 : 06] And yet, the Scripture, other than Naomi's testimony and really some other things she says in the latter part of the chapter, we have only that.

Other than that, the Scripture is silent about it, about whether or not this is God's judgment. Now, I guess I'd have to say that to speculate on whether or not God's judgment is at work here with Elimelech and his family, to focus on that and try to determine that is to miss the point.

It's to miss the point, the greater point, which again is the providence of God. That's what we need to see here.

Even in the midst of tremendous tragedy. I like what Piper wrote. And he wrote a book.

In fact, Tom Holland loaned it to me. It's really a very good book, by the way. It's entitled A Sweet and Bitter Providence. And it's about the book of Ruth. I recommend it.

[28 : 31] And I like what he wrote at this point. And he said, the point of this book is not just that God is preparing the way for the coming of the King of Glory, but that He is doing it in such a way that all of us should learn that the worst of times are not a waste.

Now, that's pretty strong. And I don't know how you feel about that when you think of what God, through His providence, has allowed to happen to His people.

Is that God at work? I don't know how you feel about that, but it seems pretty clear. And then in his book he includes this little poem, and I think it's very good.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace. Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.

That's pretty incredible. Now, what was the frowning providence in Elimelech's family then? Well, it's pretty sad.

[29 : 42] Look, starting with verse 3. Then Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left, and her two sons. All right, there's the first thing that happens.

Well, Elimelech dies. We're not told about how soon. It seems, you know, it's implied that this happened rather quickly. Verse 4.

Now, they took, her two sons took wives of the women of Moab, and the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other was Ruth, and they dwelt there about ten years.

All right, so now ten years have passed. What happens? Then both Malon and Kilion also died. Tragic. So the women survived.

The woman, rather, this is Naomi, survived her two sons and her husband. So here's Naomi. A widow. Lost her husband. Lost her two sons.

[30 : 39] All she has now, really, are her two daughters-in-law. And they're not her people. They're Moabites. And that's all that she has. It's devastating.

Now, all this, understand, all this God, according to his providence, allowed to happen.

That's pretty tough. And he allowed it to happen, ultimately, so that Ruth, the Moabitess, the Gentile, the stranger, so that Ruth could be brought to Bethlehem to meet Boaz and marry Boaz and have children and therefore be in the genealogy of Jesus.

That's what God's up to here. And by the way, who was Boaz's mother? A man. Rahab.

A Gentile. A stranger. And we could refer to that story and think about God's providence in her life. To bring her into the line of the Messiah.

[31:54] A harlot. So, a devastated family. This is all part of the providence of God. Starting with a famine. And the almost total decimation of a family.

At least all of the men in the family. From the husband to the two sons. Next, a decided future. The next move of the story moves us to some decisions that are made.

Some pretty key decisions. Verse 6. Then she, that's Naomi, arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab.

For she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had visited his people by giving them bread.

All right? So, obviously, word had reached the people there in Moab.

Reached Naomi anyway there in Moab. She apparently kept some kind of ties. Maybe someone was traveling through. Some merchant. Whatever. But the news had come that the famine had ended.

[33:01] And so, God had, she said, had visited his people. Naomi's people. Israel. And God was blessing them. And so, the famine is gone.

Now, this too, is a testimony to the providence of God. There remains now no reason for her to stay in Moab. She has no husband anymore.

No sons. So, no families there. No grandchildren or anything because nothing has been able to happen there. And so, she doesn't need to stay in Moab.

The famine is now over in Israel. Naomi will, in a sense, be better off with her people back home in Bethlehem than with strangers in Moab.

But it's not just Naomi's future that we must consider. The futures of Orpah and Ruth are also to be decided.

[34:07] They must also make a decision. Look at verse 7. Therefore, she went out from the place where she was and her two daughters-in-law with her.

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

The Lord grant that you may find rest each in the house of her husband. So, she kissed them and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, Surely we will return with you to your people.

But Naomi said, Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? Turn back, my daughters.

Go, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons, would you wait for them till they were grown?

[35:08] Would you restrain yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters. For it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me.

Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. Alright, so what do we have here? It's an interesting part of the story.

Because, you see, somehow the writer of Ruth thought that he, whoever he was, should give a good bit of space to this dialogue between Naomi and her two daughters-in-law.

It's quite a lot to be said here. And it's kind of back and forth. It's, you know, no, you just need to go back. And no, we want to go with you. And no, you need to go back. And we want to go with you.

And they kissed her and they're crying. And you have this going on and you wonder what, you know, what's the point here? And really there is some controversy about this passage.

[36:08] Not controversy in the sense of should it be there or there's some mistakes. But the controversy is about Naomi. Naomi. And it has led some to see Naomi in a bad light here in the story.

That she really is maybe not even a true believer in the one true God and so forth. But I don't think that's the case at all. On the one hand, Naomi would have been better off if her daughters-in-law had traveled with her back to Bethlehem.

She would have been somewhat better off. She would not be traveling alone. And they're young. And they could in some way provide for her needs. And so for her to send them back was not some selfish thing.

It would have been better for her if they had gone with her. You could say that on the one hand. On the other hand, and as a testimony to Naomi's character, I believe, she urged them to stay in Moab because she had nothing to offer them.

She had nothing for them. If they had returned with her back to Israel, and if they, like she, stayed true to their original husbands, their first husbands, and remained unmarried like Naomi was certainly determined to do, then their condition would have been no better than hers.

[37 : 29] It would not have been easy for them if they had traveled back, and she wanted to spare them of that. They would have been miserable with her possibly for the rest of their lives, or at least struggled for the rest of their lives.

You could say those two things, and I think that helps us understand that Naomi's not being selfish here. She's not being evil in any way, not being unspiritual in any way. But in the providence of God, there are at least two things to consider about this part of the story, and why the author of Ruth spent so much time giving us this dialogue between Naomi and her two daughters-in-law. There are two benefits to this, things to consider. First of all, what happens here in this passage is a build-up, or maybe even a foundational work for us, for what we're going to be introduced to in chapter 2.

A tremendous and wonderful kind of law among the Israelites. Some would call it a custom. And what I'm talking about here is the kinsman-redeemer.

And we're kind of introduced to that. See, what happens here is intended to prepare us then for this custom, this legal kind of procedure. It is a custom that will ultimately bring salvation to Naomi, not in the spiritual sense, but salvation in the sense that her heritage is restored to her, her inheritance, and her dead husband's line and family name would continue.

[39 : 07] This law is going to bring that about for her. We don't know that yet. It's not introduced yet. But the author is kind of preparing us for that. Now, Naomi, I think, apparently, had all but forgotten about that particular law.

Though I think she does allude to it there in verse 11. And she says, are there still sons in my womb that they may be your husbands? That's an allusion to this kinsman-redeemer.

Otherwise, she would say, you know, could you find a husband there in Israel if you go back with me? Just a husband from any family? No, she keeps a reference to the family line, her kin.

And so maybe this is an allusion to that. Could I have sons, you know, in my old age? And would you wait long enough to marry them so that the name could continue, the names of your husbands? So that may be an allusion to it. But if Naomi was referring to that custom, this legal provision, she apparently didn't know anything about Boaz. Or not only Boaz, but the nearer kin that is mentioned later on in the book.

[40 : 11] So this is, I think, a masterful kind of literary technique. It's one of the beautiful features of the book of Ruth.

A technique designed to prepare us for what is coming next. You know, kind of a slight, kind of subtle introduction to what God is going to do.

And that there now is maybe a glimmer of hope, the possibility that things are going to work out all right for Naomi.

So it introduces us to that. There's a second intent on the part of the author, I think. This dialogue between Naomi and her two daughters-in-law is intended to highlight Ruth.

Or to kind of set the stage. You might even picture Ruth on the stage and suddenly there's backlighting for her so that she comes front and center.

[41 : 11] It's a preparation for that. To, in a sense, put Ruth's decision to follow Naomi, to go with Naomi back, to put that decision in bold relief to highlight her.

Look at verse 14. Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And then we have these two statements. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law.

The implication being she kissed her goodbye. And she went back to Moab. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. But what does it say about Ruth? But Ruth clung to her.

Clung to her. Do you see contrast? Stark contrast. It's the author of the book. Now, shifting. He's about to shift from Naomi.

And he will in chapter 2 and on from there. Shifting from Naomi is the focus to Ruth. And her decision she's about to make.

[42 : 18] And her declaration of faith she's about to make. To put her front and center. Bright. Here's Ruth. Now, what does Naomi say then?

After verse 14. Look. She says to Ruth. Look. Look. Look. There's Orpah over there. Your sister-in-law. She's gone back to her people and to her gods.

Return after your sister-in-law, she said. But Ruth said, entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you. There's her decision.

A decisive decision that she has made to follow Naomi. And not just to follow her home. It's going to be something much more than that. And that leads then to the final point of chapter 1.

And that is a declared faith. A declared faith. And this really is one of the most beautiful parts of the entire book. Certainly of chapter 1. Look at verse 16.

[43 : 23] But Ruth said, entreat me not to leave you or to turn back from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go. And wherever you lodge, I will lodge.

Your people shall be my people. And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die. And there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts you and me.

That is, she's saying, let the Lord do to me what he's done to you and more. If I ever leave you, if anything but death parts us.

This is quite, quite a declaration of her faith. And what Ruth is doing here, what Ruth says here, amounts really to a complete and total surrender to Yahweh God.

The one true God. And therefore, Ruth is a beautiful, wonderful, very vivid picture of true faith.

[44 : 33] True faith. Now just think about it. We just kind of put these all together. She commits, and what she said here, she's committing to a new land that will be her place where she lives.

She's willing to follow Naomi wherever she goes. She's willing to leave Moab behind and forever follow Naomi to Israel.

She commits not only to a new land, but she commits to new leadership in her life. Whose leadership? Well, Naomi's, specifically. She's willing then to submit to Naomi and to allow Naomi to guide her life.

And we're going to see that taking place a number of times as we go through the book. She commits also to a new lifestyle, new life altogether. She's willing to give up all of the old ways of Moab and idolatry, pagan worship and so forth, and to conform her life to the way of the people who live in Israel, who worship the one true God.

She is ready to make a dramatic change in her life. That's what she's saying here. She also commits to a new lineage. A new lineage.

[45 : 52] Ruth is willing to cut all ties with Moab. She's leaving that behind. And she wants to be part of a nation which she married into. The sons of Elimelech.

She's the son of Elimelech. She wants to join with that lineage. And she is ready to claim that new lineage. She also commits to a new Lord.

And this is most significant. Probably the greatest statement Ruth makes. She's willing to give up the gods of Moab, and there were many, by the way, and follow the true and living God of Israel.

That's what she's saying here. And she commits with no limits. That's the final thing. She commits to a new land, a new leadership, a new lifestyle, a new lineage, a new Lord, and with no limits.

No limits. She commits for as long as she lives, she says. And she even invokes the curse of God upon her life if she says anything but death would be allowed to come between her and the commitment that she has made.

[46 : 59] This is very strong. And I would suggest to you that this is exactly what we commit to when we place our faith in Christ. We're committing to cutting all ties with the old life and enter into a new life of blessing before the Lord.

And to commit to His leadership for our lives. Not our own leadership or any past leadership or any other leadership, but His leadership in our lives. And we are committed to commit to a new lifestyle that's based upon the Word of God.

And we consider ourselves dead to the old life and alive to a new relationship with the Lord Jesus. That's our new lineage, by the way.

And there must be then, in this commitment, there is a new Lord, a new Master, one who will dominate every aspect, every feature of our lives, and then to commit to the Lord and to His will

without restrictions, without any limitations.

It must be absolute and it must be final. That's what Ruth committed here in the book of Ruth. And it is a picture of our commitment to Christ, our faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

[48:16] Amen.