

# Ruth and Pentecost

Rick Railston

May 24, 2015

Here we are on Pentecost. With that in mind let's turn to Romans 3. We are going to read the first two verses. Something happened near this time of year that we want to explore and maybe learn some lessons from. I am going to read it out of the New International Version. It is a little clearer. Paul is asking the question:

**Romans 3:1.** *What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?*

2) *Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. (NIV)*

The King James and the New King James say "the oracles of God."

The word that is translated "oracles" in the King James or "the very words of God" in the New International Version is Strong's number 3051, which is the Greek word "logion." It means an *utterance of God* something that God says. Zodhiates, in his Word Study of the New Testament, says this word means *the declarations of God*. In other words it is talking about the Bible. It is talking about this book that we all have in our laps today. It is so easy to take it for granted and yet it is so phenomenal.

I can remember when the Dead Sea Scrolls were first discovered. I was a little kid and then going into the teenage years. They were first discovered in 1946 and the archeological excavations went on in those caves for about twelve years from 1946 to 1956, 1957. They compared the Dead Sea Scrolls to the oldest existing scroll at that time, which was called the Isaiah Scroll dated to 125 BC. Almost a thousand years elapsed between the Isaiah Scroll and the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and guess what? They were identical, absolutely identical.

The Jews were very diligent in copying God's word. He has used them to preserve His word. Along with the preservation of His word, there are some Jewish traditions that might be or could be helpful to us. We all understand that you can't put tradition on par with scripture. Tradition is not God's word. Tradition is not divine. There is an Old Testament book that in particular the Jews have historically associated with this day, with Pentecost. That is the book of Ruth. The Jews read the book of Ruth every Pentecost.

What we are going to do today is examine the events that occurred in Ruth around the time of Pentecost, roughly three thousand years ago. We are going to see first why Ruth is associated with Pentecost and briefly look at the four chapters of Ruth to understand the story. Finally, we are going to conclude with looking at the three main characters in the book of Ruth.

Ruth herself is a foreigner from Moab in the land of Judah. Naomi, her mother-in-law, is a woman who lost everything that she had. She suffered the death of her husband and the death of her two sons. Lastly we are going to talk about Boaz, a prominent man who belonged to the tribe of Judah and lived in Bethlehem, or near to Bethlehem. We are going to see how these three have direct relationships with us today and what we go through every day.

Tradition has it that the book of Ruth was written by Samuel. We don't have the exact date when Ruth lived, but we know it was during the time of the judges, because we read that in Ruth 1:1. The Jews normally associate this book with Pentecost. The name the Jews use for Pentecost is the feast of the harvest, so there is a connection here. We know that the wave sheaf offering made during the Days of Unleavened Bread marks the beginning of the small spring barley harvest. Pentecost marked the end of that harvest. With that in mind, look at Leviticus 23:15 describing this very day.

***Leviticus 23:15.*** *And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.*

*16) Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath ... (NKJV)*

Then verses 17 through 20 talk about the two loaves of bread that were offered to God. Let's pick it up in verse 21.

*21) And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. (NKJV)*

Look at the next verse, because it seems odd that this verse would be put in this location.

*22) When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God. (NKJV)*

The context here in this admonition about gleaning and leaving in the fields is the early spring harvest. When we turn to the book of Ruth that's exactly what's going on, the early spring harvest. Look at Ruth 2:22. We are breaking into the story. We will come back to the story shortly.

**Ruth 2:22.** *And Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It is good, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, and that people do not meet you in any other field.*

*23) So she stayed close by the young women of Boaz, to glean until the end of barley harvest and wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law. (NKJV)*

So, one of the connections between the book of Ruth and Pentecost is this early harvest. We have this association with the book of Ruth and with Pentecost, because the events in Ruth occur as the spring harvest is concluding.

With this background let's go to Ruth 1:1.

**Ruth 1:1.** *Now it came to pass, in the days when the judges ruled that there was a famine in the land [Israel]. And a certain man of Bethlehem, [in] Judah, went to dwell in the country of Moab [a pagan land], he and his wife and his two sons. (NKJV)*

There is a precedent for this move. You remember the story of how Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to find food when there was a famine in Israel. To go get food when there is famine in the land is something that people are familiar with and could be done.

*2) The name of the man was Elimelech, the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion — Ephrathites of Bethlehem, [in] Judah. And they went to the country of Moab and remained there. (NKJV)*

As we are going to see, later when they left Israel they sold their land. They just made a clean break and they moved to Moab. Both of his sons marry Moabite women. One of the wife's names was Orpah. The root means *neck*. We are going to see how that applies shortly. The other one's name was Ruth, which means *friendship* or *companion*. We are going to see that's exactly what she was.

The point is that Ruth is a foreigner and, like Rehab in the conquest of Jericho, Ruth would have been steeped in idolatry. She grew up in a pagan land. All she knew was

idolatry. Keep that in mind. I am just paraphrasing the story. Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, and their two sons all die. This leaves Naomi and her two Moabite daughters-in-law all widows with nobody to provide for them. They had nothing. They certainly didn't have anything back in Israel. They had no land in Israel because they sold it. With that in mind let's pick up the story in verse 6.

*6) Then she [Naomi] arose with her daughters-in-law that she [Naomi] might return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab ... (NKJV)*

News had traveled to Moab.

*6b) ... that the LORD had visited His people [in Israel] by giving them bread. (NKJV)*

In other words the famine that they left over originally was now gone and Naomi wanted to return to her home nation, Israel. She tells Orpah and Ruth that they should stay behind in Moab. Their life is going to be tough enough as widows, but it would be even harder if they were pagan Moabite widows back in the nation of Israel. Naomi says there is no sense in doing this. This is very difficult, very tough. In verse 14:

*14) Then they [Ruth and Orpah] lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. (NKJV)*

Notice the different reactions. Orpah was kissing her goodbye, but Ruth grabbed her and would not let her go.

*15) And she [Naomi] said, "Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." (NKJV)*

She said, "I am going back to Israel. You will be better off in Moab." You see, in those days a wife was supposed to adopt the religion of her husband. That is just the way the culture worked, whether it was in Israel or whether it was in Moab. Orpah's name, as I said earlier means *neck*. It is fitting, because Orpah looked back to her old society. Naomi was leaving. Orpah didn't want to make the trip and looked back to her old society, back to paganism. It reminds us of Lot's wife, who looked back when they had to flee.

16) *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.*

17) *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." (NKJV)*

What a declaration. You see, Ruth's association with the family of Elimelech, and specifically her association with her mother-in-law, Naomi, led her to want Naomi's God to be her God. It was apparent in this verse that God is calling her. God has a plan for Ruth and He doesn't want her to stay back in Moab. He wants her to go with Naomi. Naomi must have set an incredible example for Ruth in how she conducted her life.

That brings us now to chapter 2. They have returned to Bethlehem in Judah and Ruth offers to work in the fields to provide for herself and for Naomi. Naomi in that sense is claiming her legal provisions under Israelite law. Let's go to Deuteronomy 24:19. There were provisions to provide for situations such as this.

***Deuteronomy 24:19.*** *When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger [Ruth], the fatherless, and the widow [Ruth and Naomi], that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (NKJV)*

They had a legitimate claim to what was left in the field and a good field man would leave some on purpose so that the widow and the fatherless and the stranger could be taken care of.

Ruth now comes to the field of a wealthy relative of Naomi, whose name is Boaz. My guess is she didn't know it at the time. She just came to this field. We are going to see that God was behind it. God guided her. There is no evidence that she specifically sought out Boaz's field. God was using Ruth, calling Ruth and He was sending her in a certain direction.

Here is a sidelight. The field of Boaz today exists in modern day Bethlehem. It is identified. It is interesting that the romance (I think we all know, but we are going to see) that began between Ruth and Boaz ended up producing a line through which David would come and then would come Christ. The field that is adjacent to the field of Boaz is called the shepherd's field. That is where the angels announced the birth of Christ in Luke 2. It is just interesting that those two fields to this day are side by side.

Ruth is working now in the fields of Boaz. She is working hard. She has never met Boaz. Let's go to chapter 2:5. Boaz watches this woman work. Notice his reaction.

**Ruth 2:5.** *Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?*

*6) And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab: (KJV)*

Naomi and her family, as we are going to see, were well known.

*7) And she [Ruth] said, 'Please let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves.' So she came and has continued from morning until now, though she rested a little in the house." ... (NKJV)*

The New International Version says:

*7b) ... She went into the field and has worked steadily from morning till now, except for a short rest in the shelter." (NIV)*

She was out there working. She wasn't lollygagging around. She was working hard. She worked from morning through the heat of the day with barely any rest. Her work ethic caused Boaz to take notice. He proceeds to show compassion upon her.

*8) Then Boaz said to Ruth, "You will listen, my daughter, will you not? Do not go to glean in another field, nor go from here, but stay close by my young women.*

*9) Let your eyes be on the field which they reap, and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? ... (NKJV)*

He is saying, you are going to be safe if you stay in my fields.

*9b) ... And when you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." (NKJV)*

It is interesting to note here that Boaz did not give her grain. He showed mercy on her, but he did not just hand her the grain. You see, God clearly led Ruth to Boaz's field, but Ruth had to put forth the necessary work to get the grain. It just wasn't handed to her. She had to work hard from morning to evening with just a short break. Despite the fact that this in essence was a gift, she still had to work for it.

There are some huge spiritual lessons here. She worked all day long and the indication is that she gathered over thirty pounds of barley in one day, one woman. The point is that while the generosity of Boaz couldn't be earned, she still had to work to receive the benefit of that gift, which obviously has great application for us as Christians. That's identical to God's offer of salvation for us. There is no way we can ever earn the gift of salvation. We have to work hard to even receive the blessing at the end of the day, when Christ returns. In that interim between the promise of the gift and the receiving of the gift we have to work very, very hard. Ruth, undoubtedly, did that. In our case, rather than her case of gathering barley, we are to be continually overcoming our human nature, to become spiritual rather than carnal.

With that in mind let's go to Matthew 11:12, because this specifically applies to what we are talking about here. Salvation is a gift. The gleaning of the field was a gift. We have to work hard to receive the gift.

**Matthew 11:12.** *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (NKJV)*

The Greek word for *violent* is Strong's 973. Yes, it can mean *violence*, but figuratively it can mean *energetic*. The root word is Strong's 972 and it means to *force* or *press*, to *push*. We all know by personal experience the kingdom has to be taken by pressing forward with energy, to do the job God wants us to do. Ruth was pushing forth with all the energy she had all day long to gather those thirty pounds of barley.

Now Ruth comes home to Naomi after pressing hard all day long. She shows her the grain that she has gleaned. Here this woman comes in with this big bag of barley from gleaning leftovers in the field. Naomi sees this and she is smart enough to realize something is going on here. This isn't normal for one woman to glean thirty pounds of barley in one day. No way could that normally be done.

**Ruth 2:19.** *And her mother-in-law said to her, "Where have you gleaned today? And where did you work? Blessed be the one who took notice of you." ... (NKJV)*

She knows that Ruth had to have help somewhere along the way.

*19b) ... So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The man's name with whom I worked today is Boaz." (NKJV)*

Now Naomi connects the dots.

20) *Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not forsaken His kindness to the living and the dead!" (NKJV)*

Naomi is overjoyed, because she realizes that Boaz is a close relative of her dead husband, Elimelech. Boaz could redeem the family name and redeem the land. She makes that connection.

**Ruth 3:1.** *Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, ... (NKJV)*

The King James says:

*1b) ... rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for rest or security, depending on the translation is Strong's 4494. It just simply means *quiet* or *a settled spot*. Figuratively it can mean a home, a place of rest. So, Naomi says to Ruth, I am going to seek rest for you. I am going to seek a home for you, a place of security for you.

Now go back to Ruth 1:9 where Naomi is speaking.

**Ruth 1:9.** *The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." (NKJV)*

If they stayed in Moab, she is saying, you are going to find rest with your own people in your own house. That's the same word. Now, Naomi is saying to Ruth, I am going to find rest for you. I am going to find peace and a home for you. I am going to do my best to do that. What she is saying in Ruth 3:1 is that she is going to seek a husband for Ruth.

She comes up with a plan to do so. We know in hindsight that God was behind the plan all along. Boaz goes to sleep next to the barley. This was common in those days where the owner of the field would be out there. He would not want thieves to come by, so he would be out sleeping in the field as part of a security team to make sure nothing untoward happened. He wakes up at midnight to find someone at his feet. As we are going to see, he is laying one way and she is crosswise at his feet. If you woke up in the middle of the night and found something moving down at the end of your feet, it would get your attention very quickly, like it got his.

**Ruth 3:9.** *"Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. ... (NIV)*

She calls herself his servant.

*9b) ... "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer." (NIV)*

This is a humble petition on her part. She calls herself his servant, just like Abigail called herself David's servant. Ruth is at his feet; I am your servant. This may explain why she is at his feet, because she feels she is his servant.

Jamison Fausset, and Brown Commentary says this about this incident:

Boaz probably slept upon a mat or skin; Ruth lay crosswise at his feet—a position in which Eastern servants frequently sleep in the same chamber or tent with their master; and if they want a covering, custom allows them that benefit from part of the covering on their master's bed.

So, it was common that a servant could take a portion of the covering and put it over them to stay warm. That was not anything untoward at all. Going on:

Resting, as the Orientals do at night, in the same clothes they wear during the day, there was no indelicacy in a stranger, or even a woman, putting the extremity of this cover over her.

There was no illicit motive here. It was common practice. So, the bottom line is that Ruth is responding to the mercy that Boaz has shown her by asking for him to redeem her. By putting the cover over her in this situation, she is not a paid servant. She is asking for him, in essence, to take her under his wing.

That's exactly what God did with ancient Israel. Go to Ezekiel 16:8. Christ, the God of the Old Testament is telling us how He looked upon Israel and what His attitude was.

**Ezekiel 16:8.** *When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. ... (NKJV)*

What Boaz did was analogous to this. He spread part of his cover over her to take her under his wing, so to speak.

*8b) ... Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine, says the Lord GOD. (NKJV)*

What Christ, the God of the Old Testament, did for Israel in a very small way Boaz is doing for Ruth. Notice what he said after she asked for him to take her under his wing, so to speak.

**Ruth 3:10.** *Then he said, "Blessed are you of the LORD, my daughter! For you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, in that you did not go after young men, whether poor or rich." (NKJV)*

Now Boaz, by all research, all commentaries, is considerably older than Ruth. Some place him as approaching his 80<sup>th</sup> year. We don't know exactly. We will find out some day. She was considerably younger than Boaz. He is complimenting her and saying, at your age you could go after young men, but you have chosen not to. That shows a great deal of character, because the Hebrew word for kindness can mean *piety* or it can mean *a good deed*. Remember, Ruth's name is *friend* or *companion*.

She chose this course of action not just to benefit herself, but she had Naomi in mind. She was thinking of her mother-in-law and her mother-in-law's benefit over the long term and the lineage of Elimelech's household. Not only had she refused to leave Naomi, she worked all day to provide for her and now she was asking Boaz to redeem her. Why did she ask? You see, if Boaz didn't redeem Ruth, then Naomi would have no one to provide for her. She had nothing. She had no land. She had no relatives. Yes, she knew some people there, but she had no way of taking care of herself. Ruth here, it is obvious, is thinking of others and not herself. Remember, we are told to esteem others better than ourselves. She was doing just that.

Recall ancient Israel kept the year of the jubilee so that when you sold a property, it was only like a lease. At the end of the fifty years or whenever the jubilee occurred, the land reverted to its original owner. If you bought the property, it would last until the jubilee then it would go back to its original owner. The problem here is that there were no provisions for widows for them to keep the land after their husband died. Let's go to Numbers 27:8. God did provide, but we are going to see it took, in this case, Boaz to intervene for her to get her land back. You see, God always provides and He provides ways for fairness and justice.

**Numbers 27:8.** *And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, ... (NKJV)*

Elimelech was dead. His two sons were dead.

*8b) ... then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.*

*9) If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.*

*10) If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's brothers.*

*11) And if his father has no brothers, ... (NKJV)*

Now we are getting to the point.

*11b) ... then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it. And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded Moses. (NKJV)*

As we know, Naomi's husband is dead. Her sons are dead. She has nothing at all. What most commentaries agree on in this situation is that Naomi could keep the land until her death but then it would go to the next closest kin and Elimelech's legacy, his family line, would be gone. There would be no inheritance. There would be no land down the road. Ruth is asking not only for Boaz to marry her, but also to preserve the lineage of Elimelech and Elimelech's inheritance; to make that last and to restore his family line and to insure that Naomi was provided for for the rest of her life. Boaz understood this. He knew God's law and that is why Boaz said what he did to Ruth when she was laying at his feet. He said, you are more kind in the end than you were in the beginning. You are looking after not only yourself, but your mother-in-law and then all those that should descend from that line.

There was only one problem. I think we know what the problem is. There was a kinsman closer to Naomi than Boaz was. Therefore, this kinsman had, we would say today, the right of first refusal when it came to redeeming the land, to marrying Ruth, and raising a family. That leads us to Ruth 4:1. Boaz, understanding this, had to go to this nearer kinsman.

**Ruth 4:1.** *Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, "Come aside, friend, sit down here." So he came aside and sat down.*

*2) And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here." So they sat down.*

*3) Then he said to the close relative, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, sold the piece of land which belonged to our brother Elimelech." (NKJV)*

Remember this.

*4) "And I thought to inform you, saying, 'Buy it back in the presence of the inhabitants and the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know; for there is no one but you to redeem it, and I am next after you.'" ... (NKJV)*

I am next in line after you.

*4b) ... And he said, "I will redeem it." (NKJV)*

Now, Boaz, astute man that he was said the following. Just remember:

*5) Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, you must also buy it from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to perpetuate the name of the dead through his inheritance." (NKJV)*

He had an obligation to have children with Ruth so that line would continue. In other words, Boaz is saying, if you want the land fine, but you have to marry Ruth as part of the deal. That was part of God's law.

*6) And the close relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I ruin my own inheritance. You redeem my right of redemption for yourself, for I cannot redeem it." (NKJV)*

We see here that this kinsman is either unwilling or unable to redeem it. The speculation is, when you read the commentaries and such, and it is logical, that by having to marry Ruth, it would further dilute his inheritance to his existing children; water that down. It would create all kinds of problems, so he backed out of the deal.

In verse 7 they exchanged shoes in front of the ten elders. What on earth is going on here?

Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament says:

The custom itself, ... arose from the fact that fixed property was taken possession of by treading upon the soil, and hence taking off the shoe and handing it to another was a symbol of the transfer of a possession or right of ownership.

It was just a symbolic thing. It is kind of strange for us today, but that cemented the deal.

*13) So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son. (NKJV)*

As we will see, the son's name was Obed. Obed had a son whose name was Jesse. Jesse had a son whose name was David. That line went all the way down to Jesus Christ. We see here that Jesus Christ had Moabite blood in Him. His line was not pure racially in that regard. That's an interesting point.

We have seen here this incredible story of the death of a husband and two sons with incredible despair and then at the end there was redemption, there was love and there was joy. When we think about it, yes, this is an interesting story. It happened over three thousand years ago. It occurred around Pentecost and there has to be a connection for us today, otherwise it wouldn't be here. There are things we can learn.

We are going to spend the rest of the sermon asking the question, why did God preserve this beautiful story? What was His point? What did He want us to learn? We know Paul said in Romans 15 that whatsoever is written is written for our learning. If that's the case, let's see what we can learn from the lives of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz.

Let's start with Naomi. She was a woman who had to leave Judah because of the famine. Put yourself in her position. What if today we had a horrible famine? We see it in California. What if we just had to leave? Your whole family was there, all of your possessions, the land that you owned. Every connection that you had going back generations was in that area with that land. What if you had to leave your family, your friends, your home and move to a foreign, pagan land just in order to feed yourself? Think of what Naomi went through and her husband for that matter also. Once you make that transfer and move into that totally foreign land, your husband dies and your two sons die. Put yourself in her position. At that moment she had nothing; no family, no home, no way to provide for herself. Remember, she sold her land back in Judah, as Ruth 4:3 says. All she has is two pagan daughters-in-law. She has truly nothing in the sense of no land, no children, no husband and nobody that's equipped to provide for her.

Notice her attitude in Ruth 1:19. She is returning from Moab to Israel, arrives in Bethlehem.

**Ruth 1:19.** *Now the two of them went until they came to Bethlehem. And it happened, when they had come to Bethlehem, that all the city was excited because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" (NKJV)*

Obviously, she and her family and her husband were well known. They have been gone some time, but they are welcomed back. They haven't forgotten them.

*20) But she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi;" ... (NKJV)*

That means in the Hebrew *pleasant*.

*20b) ... "call me Mara," ... (NKJV)*

In the Hebrew that means *bitter*. You can imagine, if you were in that situation bitterness would be a problem. Bitterness would be a trial.

*20 continued) ... "for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.*

*21) I went out full, and the LORD has brought me home again empty." ... (NKJV)*

I've got nothing.

*21b) ... "Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me?" (NKJV)*

Some have speculated that God was punishing her for leaving Israel in the first place. I have no idea if that is true. Some day we will find that out, but I'm not going to say that is true, because we don't know. Regardless, here is a woman who lost everything and then we read in this verse the other thing she's lost is her hope. She is down in the dumps. She is bitter and she says God's cursing me.

Have we ever been in that situation? Have we ever had a trial where we have lost hope? Have we seen others in the church going through such severe trials that they have lost hope? Or have we been tempted to lose hope when going through a trial. Let's go to Jeremiah 32:26. This is what Naomi learned going through this trial.

**Jeremiah 32:26.** *Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 27 "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me? (NKJV)*

Is there anything that I can't do? Any trial that's so difficult that I can't solve it or take care of it?

Naomi learned this powerful lesson. Let's go to Ruth 4:13. We read part of this before, but we'll continue on.

**Ruth 4:13.** *So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son.*

*14) Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a close relative; and may his name be famous in Israel!" (NKJV)*

They had no clue how famous this name was going to be in all Israel.

*15) And may he be to you a restorer of life ... (NKJV)*

That's exactly what happened.

*15b) ... and a nourisher of your old age; ... (NKJV)*

That's exactly what happened.

*15 continued) ... for your daughter-in-law, who loves you, who is better to you than seven sons, has borne him." (NKJV)*

What a blessing.

*16) Then Naomi took the child and laid him on her bosom, and became a nurse to him. (NKJV)*

She was part of this bond between Ruth and Obed and herself. She helped raise that child. What a blessing to this woman who a little before had nothing.

*17) Also the neighbor women gave him a name, saying, "There is a son born to Naomi." And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. (NKJV)*

This has to remind us of the situation with Job. Remember, after God took virtually everything away from Job, including his health, God gave him twice what he had before. Here Naomi had nothing and look at her in the end. Look at what God says. Is

anything too hard for Me? Is there something that just stumps Me that I can't intervene and take care of it?

The lesson from Naomi is that no matter how bad things look, no matter how serious the trial is, nothing is too big for God. Nothing is too great for God to take care of it or to take care of us. We can have faith that relief will occur either in this life or in the next life. We will be healed either in this life or in the next life. We will be at peace either in this life or in the next life. That is the lesson from Naomi.

What is the lesson from Ruth? We are going to see that Ruth is a type of the church. Remember, Ruth was a Moabitess. She was a foreigner in a strange land to her. She grew up a pagan and now she is in Israel which worships the true God. We, in essence, were the same when we came into the church. Even today, in this country, or wherever you are around the world, in the country you reside in, the same thing is true. The nations have drifted so far away from God that all of us are strangers. All of us are foreigners believing the way we believe. Let's go to Hebrews 11, the faith chapter.

**Hebrews 11:13.** *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off ... (NKJV)*

We see them afar off today.

*13b) ... were assured of them, embraced them ... (NKJV)*

We do today.

*13 continued) ... and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (NKJV)*

You see, Ruth was a stranger and a pilgrim coming to Israel. We are strangers and pilgrims believing in the true God, practicing the true religion in a pagan world and an increasingly pagan United States of America. What she experienced was a precursor to what we are experiencing right now, meaning the church, the body of Christ. In Ruth's life, Boaz initiated a relationship. She put herself in a position at his feet to have the relationship, but if Boaz hadn't responded nothing would have happened. He asked who she was. He showed mercy to her during the day when he was asking about who this woman was. He showed mercy in her gleaning. Once that mercy was shown guess what Ruth did? She took action. She showed initiative. When Naomi told her what to do, when she said go lie at this wealthy man's feet, Ruth said, whatever you tell me to do that's what I will do.

The same thing is true for us when we come in to the body of Christ, when we come into the church. You see, God initiated the relationship because He called us.

**John 6:44.** *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; ... (NKJV)*

So, God initiated the relationship. With that in mind let's go to Ephesians 2:4. When God initiated the relationship and we responded, God started showing mercy.

**Ephesians 2:4.** *But God, who is rich in mercy, ... (NKJV)*

Now, Boaz was the same. He was rich in mercy toward Ruth.

*4b) ... because of His great love with which He loved us, (NKJV)*

I don't think it's a stretch to say, when Boaz saw her, and saw her work ethic, something started clicking. A relationship developed and love developed.

*8) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (NKJV)*

You see, God shows us grace and we respond just as Boaz showed Ruth grace and she responded.

Once God initiates the relationship as with Ruth, He expects action from us. He expects us to do certain things. Ruth is a type of the church. She responded when grace was shown. She responded when mercy and kindness was shown. She told her mother-in-law, whatever you want me to do I'll do it, because she knew something was going on; both the women did, I'm sure. With that in mind, let's go to James 4. This is what our response should be always when our calling from God comes. Our job is to:

**James 4:8.** *Draw near to God ... (NKJV)*

God's response is:

*8b) ... and He will draw near to you. ... (NKJV)*

Our job is to:

*8 continued) ... Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (NKJV)*

When we came into the church, we were double-minded. God was calling us. Yes, we had all of this new truth and understanding, but we were still steeped in the world. In a sense, we came in double-minded, looking and struggling, falling back and slipping and all of that. Once God shows mercy and kindness to us, our job is to draw near to Him, cleanse our minds, cleanse our hearts, purify ourselves.

In that sense, Ruth is very much a type of the church. As her redeemer married her, our Redeemer will marry us at the end of the day. There is no way we can earn that redemption. There is nothing Ruth can do to earn the redemption offered by Boaz. Yes, she could set a good example. Yes, she could follow her mother-in-law's advice, but there is no way she could earn what Boaz did for her. There is no way we can earn redemption, but we can bring forth fruits that show that we appreciate the redemption. We appreciate the mercy, in other words to show how thankful we are for our calling and for our redemption. Ruth showed how appreciative she was for that mercy. By her conduct she made Boaz want to give her that mercy, want to help her out, want to intervene for her mother-in-law's sake, too. God does the same with us. If we show by our fruits that we are appreciative, if we want His mercy, we are so thankful for His mercy, God will do the same thing over and over.

***Luke 12:32.*** *Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (NKJV)*

It is His good pleasure if we respond with fruit, if we respond by showing Him we want to have the mind of Christ. We want to live like Christ, think like Christ.

Look at Ruth's fruits. She had loyalty. Remember Ruth 1:17. She promised she would never leave Naomi no matter what.

***Ruth 1:17.*** *Where you die, I will die, ... (NKJV)*

She worked very hard. In Ruth 2 she worked very hard from morning until evening. She got Boaz' attention by that work ethic. She set a Christ-like example in Ruth 3:10 when she was at his feet and he said:

***Ruth 3:10.*** *... you have shown more kindness at the end than at the beginning, (NKJV)*

That is fruit on her part. It is clear that she may have wanted Boaz as a husband, just personally, but she was doing it for Naomi also. She had great concern for someone other than herself.

During this anniversary of the creation of the New Testament church, let's remember that this woman was a type of what we need to become as children of God and to have all of the fruits that she showed.

The third person in this trio is Boaz. We are going to see that Boaz was a type of Christ. He was the redeemer. He was Ruth's redeemer. If Ruth was a type of the church, then it is logical that Boaz being her redeemer must be a type of Christ. The Hebrew word for "redeemer" is Strong's 1350. It says *to redeem (according to the Oriental law of kinship), i.e. to be the next of kin (and as such to buy back a relative's property, marry his widow, etc.)*. It means *deliver, purchase or ransom*. Boaz did all of that as Ruth's redeemer.

Just as Boaz was Ruth's physical redeemer, who radically changed her life, radically changed Naomi's life from despair to joy, Christ is our spiritual Redeemer. In this age, this disposition, He is going to redeem the first fruits. Look at 1 Peter 1:18. Peter is saying a fundamental truth.

**1 Peter 1:18.** *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. (NKJV)*

Christ is going to do that for us today. Ultimately He will do it for all humanity. So, Boaz was the type of Christ in the sense that he redeemed Ruth. He was a precursor of Jesus Christ, who will redeem us as the first fruits and all of mankind. Notice Isaiah 54:5. You see this is what Christ is going to do for all mankind. What a relief that will be when that comes. It will stop the fighting, the butchery, the evil that is going on in this world. It just makes you sick.

**Isaiah 54:5.** *For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. (NKJV)*

We look at Boaz. This man was a prototype of Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Let's conclude now. We have studied the book of Ruth. It is a three thousand year old story that happened during the time of Pentecost. It happened during the time of the judges. It's much more than just a story. God decided to preserve it for our learning, for our understanding, for lessons for the first fruits at this time, all these years down the road.

There is the story of Naomi, who is a woman that lost literally everything to the point that it changed her to be bitter. She lost her hope. We saw that no trial is too big for God and for Jesus Christ. She ended up happier than if she had had seven sons, we are told. She literally became a nurse to the line of Jesus Christ through David. What a blessing it turned out to be.

Then we see the story of Ruth. She was a foreigner. She was an outcast in Israel, yet this man, Boaz, showed her tremendous mercy. He ultimately redeemed her and ultimately married her. The same is true for us. Without Christ's sacrifice all of us are worthy of death. We can't earn anything. We can't do anything. We are the weak of the world. She was the exactly the same way as a foreigner in Israel. You see, what she did is an example of our coming to our calling of Jesus Christ calling us. Through His sacrifice He opened up a direct relationship with God. He opened up God's holy spirit to, as Christ said in John 14, make our abode in you.

***John 14:17. ... dwells with you and will be in you. (NKJV)***

If we overcome, as Ruth did, if we respond with fruits, we will be offered eternal life, even though we are not worthy of it, even though we can never repay Christ's sacrifice, even though we can never earn it. Like Ruth marrying Boaz, the joy we look forward to is that day when we marry Jesus Christ. All of the troubles we go through today, all of the people on the prayer list, all of the evil in the world is going to be washed away at that moment. We will not remember the pain or the suffering or the sorrow or the struggle, because we will be the bride of Jesus Christ.

Then we saw the story of Boaz, who is a type of Christ. He redeemed Ruth out of mercy, but he loved her at the same time. He didn't have to show mercy, but by her conduct, by her fruits he wanted to show mercy to her. Through them came the grandfather of David. Look at us. We have so much more. Christ loves us with a love that we can't describe, that we can't comprehend it fully today. Some day we will. Christ loves us, as He loves all of mankind, and He will redeem us and will ultimately redeem all of mankind.

Here we are at Pentecost. This day was the coming of the holy spirit. The book of Ruth is very appropriate to that. The holy spirit makes all of this possible. The holy spirit comes from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, our Savior. So, the book of Ruth ties in marvelously with the day of Pentecost.

Let's remember on this day to thank God for the tremendous meaning of these holy days that we understand. It's not because we are brilliant, not because we have high IQs, but because God has opened our mind and given us His holy spirit, so we can understand these days. Because of that, let's remember the lessons from the book of Ruth.