



Shaqah



*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

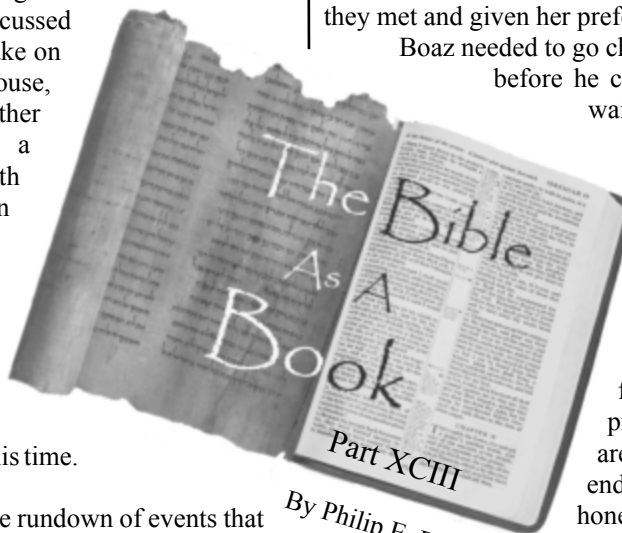
Last time we continued our overview of the Book of Ruth and talked about how Boaz went to the gate of the city to talk to a relative who was ahead of him in the line of those who should take over Elimelech's house since he and his sons had all passed away. We talked about the fact the man had said he would not be taking Ruth as his wife in order to raise up children in her deceased husband's name and that brought us to the ceremony that was to take place according to the Law if a man makes such a determination. This caused us to discuss not just what did happen between Boaz and the relative but what the Law says should have happened and why that had meaning to people of the chosen nation which might be lost on most people of the world. We discussed how Boaz then declares he would take on the responsibility of Elimelech's house, including Ruth, and the elders and other witnesses proceeded to declare a blessing upon Boaz and his union with Ruth. This took us into a discussion about an important element in that blessing which, in relationship to who Ruth was, has greater interest to the fact following God's will is more important than any thoughts of men. This brought us through Ruth chapter 4 verse 12 and we are ready to start in verse 13 this time.

Verse 13 is where we see the rundown of events that would eventually lead up to the all important reasons this book is included in the Bible. We have talked far more extensively about the book than an overview was intended to do and along the way we've covered how Boaz and Ruth came to the point Boaz could truly take Ruth to be his wife. Now we see it wasn't all talk. However, before we totally jump to the end of the few verses we have left here, let's take a minute to back up and think about the human elements we covered in the lead up to verse 13. Ruth had been told by Naomi to patiently wait for Boaz to accomplish what he must accomplish in going to the gate and talking to the relative first in line to take her as a wife. Boaz had assured Ruth he'd take care of what needed done and Naomi assured Ruth of her belief Boaz wouldn't rest until he had accomplished it. In the last few segments we've talked about Boaz going to the gate, gathering the witnesses, and speaking to

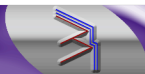
the relative, we might lose sight a bit of the fact Ruth is at home waiting to hear the result of these events. Ruth knew that by joining the nation and following her mother-in-law's instructions for how to offer herself to Boaz, she was yielding to whatever outcome those events might bring. It's not clear in the story if Naomi was or was not aware there was a man in her husband's family who was closer in relationship than Boaz and who might end up with Ruth. However, it would seem Boaz mentioning this man to Ruth was truly the first she had heard of it or known this was possible. The obvious human reaction was that Ruth hoped she would one day be Boaz's wife or at least a part of his house. He had shown her kindness from the first day they met and given her preferential treatment all along. Hearing

Boaz needed to go check with another man of the family before he could take her meant Ruth was not waiting to find out if she would end up with a husband but exactly who that man would be!

Thus, we can stray off a little here into the human story that happens in between verse 12 and verse 13. Surely it had to be one of great joy! The important facts for the record God is preserving for us through this book are to look at how Boaz and Ruth did end up together and have a child. We honestly don't know if Boaz came to Naomi's house or went home and sent for Ruth, but it's hard to believe he didn't go personally. I also believe the story gives details that indicate Boaz was as excited about this as Ruth and that certainly would have compelled him to go directly back to her. In that case, how exciting must it have been for Boaz to show up at Naomi's house with the man's shoe in his hand! Had Naomi went over the tradition with Ruth as to what would normally happen according to the Law in order to know what Boaz having the shoe meant? Certainly Naomi had to know since she seemed to understand the traditions of near "kinsman" taking her husband's house so well! As we hit on last time, the other relative didn't have to follow the tradition since it was not Ruth who had come to the gate to confront him. This makes the fact Boaz returned with the shoe in hand that much more a solid confirmation she would be



By Philip E. Busby



Boaz's wife. I think there's little to no doubt this was a union of love and as such, what a happy moment this must have been for Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi. In this situation all their best hopes had come true!

This story is such a great illustration of how God uses the lives of people willing to follow after Him and how such things can bring both times of joy within a person's lifetime as well as blessings long into the future. As we actually look at the words of verse 13 we find the confirmation Ruth did become Boaz's wife, and unlike so many other stories we read where the couple is barren for a time waiting on God's timing, Boaz and Ruth had what appears to be immediate success! On top of that there is a fact very important to the continuance of this family's name and that's the fact they had a son. As we go to verse 14 we hit an interesting observation. Ruth is never mentioned by name again but instead simply referred to as, "the woman." Now, you can interpret the use of that phrasing to be talking about a midwife or other helper who was there at the birth of Ruth's child. Certainly such a person's name would not be important to the story it would seem. However, in that case one would think there might have been more of a reference to such a woman as being specifically the midwife or a friend of Naomi. What we get, starting with verse 14, is this very generic wording that really only tells us the person speaking was a female.

Again, one is free to interpret this differently but what is important is not who the specific woman speaking was, and that's the point! The book is named for Ruth, and all through the book we marvel at Ruth's convictions and desire to serve The Lord. That said, Naomi is right there in the story from the very beginning. It's Naomi and her husband, along with their two sons who go off to Moab in search of a better life. We don't know how much Naomi wanted to do this, but her husband thought it best and so it happened. When Elimelech is gone we are left with just Naomi and her two sons who need wives. The two sons take wives which is where Ruth enters the picture and this happens early on. However, Ruth is nothing special over her sister-in-law until the two sons die and Naomi is all that's left of the family which came to Moab. It is Naomi who chooses to leave and head back home to Israel. Did this happen just because she felt she was alone in a strange land? The probability of that being the main force driving her is good but as far as we know Naomi had never really wanted to come to Moab. With all the men of her house gone she takes the opportunity to head home, and even if this was not the main thing driving her decision it might have been a great incentive for her to go.

She certainly needed something, if not more than one reason, to take a journey like this being just a woman all by herself. The distance between where they probably were in Moab and where Naomi wanted to be in Israel would be considered nothing by today's standards but for the day we are talking about in this story, traveling such a distance was an undertaking. Naomi had to contemplate whether she wanted to stay in an established place where she had two daughters-in-law and possibly their families for some sense of stability, or does she risk striking out on such a journey all by herself trusting she could find what she needed and be safe enough to make it home. In the end we see Ruth went with her, but Naomi didn't know that would happen and did what she could to persuade her

daughters-in-law not to go with her. This tells us Naomi intended to make the trek all by herself and one has to imagine she was no spring chicken by this point in her life! All this emphasizes how much this story is about Naomi at least as much as it is about Ruth. Ruth becomes important because just as Ruth needed a husband for the family to move forward, Naomi needed a son to see her family continue. Since her sons died and she'd have no more, she needed a daughter-in-law for it not to be a sealed deal that her and her husband's family died along with their sons!

Unlike her sister-in-law who took Naomi's advice and turned back to stay in Moab, Ruth would be "the woman" to fulfill that need! Ruth would be the woman who made the journey back to Israel have more meaning for Naomi than just a way to live and die among her own people. This is why Naomi is excited when she hears about how in going out to glean for food Ruth had by some miracle went right to the land of a near kinsman. Ruth, especially at that point, wouldn't have had a clue why that really mattered. Even if she had been looking into the Law God gave Israel, she was a Moabite woman. The fact she had been married to a man from Israel and the Law said anything about how a family was to continue when the man's death occurs, Ruth had no reason to believe that applied in her case. When it comes to how much Ruth knew about the Law, we must also consider Ruth did not have the great blessing we have today where she could simply pick up a copy of the Law and read it for herself. She didn't even live in a day like we see by the coming of The Messiah where there were established synagogues through the land which each held a copy of the Law she could hear portions of read each Sabbath. No, Ruth was learning the Laws of God by listening to and walking among the people, learning their "traditions" as she did.

Thus, we are, once again, back to the all importance of Naomi. Naomi would point out to Ruth the fact she had ended up gleaning on Boaz's land did hold exciting prospects. It was as if God had given Naomi a sign, a glimmer of hope that what the Law prescribed as a should have happened might actually happen for her in spite of the fact Ruth was a Moabite by blood! All we just covered is why it would also be Naomi who would guide Ruth through how to let Boaz know she was willing to follow the Law of God in the matter. This was important because while Boaz instantly had taken a liking to Ruth, meaning he might one day want her as a wife if she was available, it was Naomi who gave meaning to the fact such an event could mean what these latter verses of the book are emphasizing. So I say again, this was as much or more Naomi's story than it was Ruth's. None of that is to take a single thing away from Ruth! Ruth was an amazing woman who loved her mother-in-law in a way we are specifically told fades among people who do not serve God. (Micah 7:5-7) Since Jesus' return won't happen until it is as it was in the days of Noah, the fact that's one of the markers for knowing we live in a corrupt society means it's not normal but a sign people's hearts are growing to only be evil continually. (Matt. 24:37)

The fact Ruth loved her mother-in-law as she did shows us her heart was in a Godly place because it's God's intent we love one another. (I Pet. 3:8-9) It was the kind of bond that needed to exist for what Ruth did with her life to have meaning

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we finished our talk about the time Isaac went to Gerar among the Philistines to buy food during a famine. In doing that we discussed the benefits Isaac got out of the situation of telling the Philistines Rebekah was his sister instead of his wife. That sounds strange to say but it gave us an opportunity to talk about how true it is that faith can be the only way to our salvation. At times God uses our mistakes to give us things we might not otherwise have gained. These are most often intangible things but they can be deemed blessings which is not how we as Christians think things work. Instead, we think like pagans believing when we do wrong God comes down on us to punish us in some way shape or form, and when we're good God should bless us. Understanding this is not always the case is no excuse for us to do wrong because a blessing might come of it, but as Paul talks about in Romans 3 and 8 God can work for our good and/or the good of others in spite of our mistake(s). Thus, walking with God in a relationship with Him (faith) is the only way for us to know what's really happening in a lot of situations. From that topic we went on to what Isaac did after he left the Philistines, which was go out and trust God would take care of him just as God had promised. From there we discussed the fact Isaac was quickly growing into a great man of faith in his own right. This brought us through Genesis chapter 26 verse 13 and we are ready to begin in verse 14 this time.

In talking about what we discussed in verse 13 we covered a lot of the meaning for why we see the list of things Isaac had in 14. However, this verse holds two truths we want to look at. First is the fact this list of things he owned feels like the kind of pagan blessings I talked about last time God is not in the business of generally giving. We are told in verse 13 Isaac came to be a great man and then 14 gives us all these wonderful things he possessed. That makes it seem pagan thinking is correct. Isaac did good and got good from God. However, that is not what the verses are telling us. As we at least touched on last time there's the truth Isaac was the second man in the all important line starting with Abraham who would go on to form the chosen nation. Our study has been emphasizing how much these days we're looking at concerning the life of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are very much about establishing this family in the land of Canaan. God was not ready to give this land totally over to the family or even a small portion. We keep in mind the fact the only real piece of this land these beginning generations of the nation ever owned would be the field and cave Abraham bought for the sake of burying Sarah. This means God was not going to show Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob to be established in this land by causing them to literally be the owners of a vast part of the land itself.

Now, along with this is the very important truth we do not talk a lot about, and that's the fact it would be very hard for anyone of those days to actually possess land without being a king of some kind who ruled over territory that was considered his and/or belong to the people the king ruled over. This is part of why there was early, and often conflicts, between the

founding fathers of the chosen nation and the Philistines. They both lived, and when it comes to Abraham's family it's more important to say they kept their possessions, in this south end of Canaan. The Philistines were a specific people with a ruler over them. In very European terms this made them a kingdom whether small or great. Abraham's family on the other hand was clearly just a household. It couldn't be much of a growing tribe of people because Abraham had sent his first son (Ishmael) off to the south, and the six sons he had with Keturah after Sarah's death were sent to the east. Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac were all there was of the family line that mattered and who remained in the land of Canaan. Of course, this is what God wanted. Once Abraham and Sarah were gone from this world, Isaac and his wife Rebekah would be all there was of the family until they had two sons. However, even the birth of Jacob and Esau didn't count for a great expansion.

Esau would make his choices and head off to the southeast to establish his family as the later people we know as Edomites. Jacob would be the only one who stayed in the land, but even that was after a long absence while God accomplished almost all the growth of his family as he hid from Esau in Mesopotamia. Jacob would return but once Isaac and Rebekah had passed, it was only him, his wives, and their sons that made up the family. This made for a bigger group, but just as that group was becoming one large enough to be considered a people, God would take the family to Egypt and this is what starts us down the road of having the later deliverance from Egypt we're all so familiar with. The important details to remember are that even after this happened Jacob made it clear that when he passed away his body was to be taken back for burial to the cave Abraham had bought. (Gen. 49:28-50:14) That might seem like about the end of the family's connection to the land of Canaan until the Exodus, but remember Joseph made a very similar demand of the family. Unlike Jacob, Joseph's body would not be returned upon his death, but taking his body back was something the family was to do when they one day left Egypt to return to the promised land. (Gen. 50:22-26) This was the prophecy that solidified the fact it was in God's plan for it to happen one day and the family/nation should wait for it. When it did, the Bible records the children of Israel did take the remains of Joseph with them during the Exodus, and in the Book of Joshua we have it recorded they took care of burying Joseph's remains in the land as he had requested. (Ex. 13:17-19, Josh. 24:32)

All this emphasizes how much God did not start the family off in Canaan and then decide they'd be better if they established themselves in Egypt, only to turn around and decide Canaan was the better land to establish them on. There was no back and forth on God's part and nothing man did changed that determination. It was known since the days of Abraham Canaan would be the home of the chosen nation, and in spite of how much the family grew into a nation size family numerically while in Egypt, the promise of God was that they would come

back to Canaan when the time was right. This is why I hit so often in my teaching on the point that God's intent was to bring the nation right back into this south end of Canaan when they came out of Egypt. The fact it didn't happen that way is one of those times when the plan had to shift a bit due to man's wrong actions. These are the elements we need to put together to have a fuller picture of what's really going on in the Bible stories we read. We can gain inspiration from fractionalizing the Bible, but too few who call themselves Christians have a grasp on the entire story, along with such seemingly minor details which give us a view of what God has been attempting to do among us; even in spite of our resistance to certain things and certain times.

Such fallacies are what throws us off from looking at God and His actions in our personal lives and seeing the truth. It's what causes people to swallow down a lot of false teaching thinking nothing of it when the Bible clearly shows us the teachings are wrong. Here in verse 13 and 14 we are talking about the how and why God did what He did with Isaac in order to establish him on a land which the full bloom of the chosen nation wouldn't come to utilize for years into the future. God made a point of the founding family not owning land in Canaan but by giving Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob things such as we see listed in verse 14 they were established in the same way a nation of people would be established in spite of being such a small core family in these early days. If you get nothing else out of this entire segment of teaching I hope you will let that point really soak in! Israel is not just a later force of people who owe their presence on the land to coming, conquering, and to some degree living among indigenous people we call Canaanites. Through God's actions in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's lives God made the chosen nation just as indigenous as anyone there. Certainly by our time the chosen nation's descendants, whom we know as Jews, represent the most indigenous to the promised land people to still exist in our modern day! This is why God attempts to get the children of Israel to trust Him in entering the promised land at this south end directly following the Exodus from Egypt. Just as is true now, things would look different if all the people God attempted to use truly did what He asked of them. If Israel had of entered the south, they would not have been such an invading force in Canaan because the people living in the south should have seen their return as no surprise. When the family was just a family in these early days they were rivals to a nation of people (Philistines) we clearly see still existed much later down the time line. No one who was displaced or destroyed by the entering of the children of Israel would be happy to see them come, but the fact they came would honestly have been just them returning to their native home. To the people of the time this would have screamed how much The One True God was guiding this nation of people who had once been only a great house in Canaan!

The truth is, we don't know how much the chosen nation lost by refusing to go in at the south end. We know they lost a generation of people and 40 long years of wandering in the wilderness instead of possessing land, but we can only speculate as to what else. We talk about how great a miracle it was to see the Jordan River parted to allow the nation to enter the land from the east and much further north, but as a good student of the Bible we can also say, such a miracle had to introduce the nation into the promised land because of the facts of where and when

they entered had changed. Just how much more organized and impactful could the beginnings of the nation on the promised land have been if they'd went in on the south end instead of being seen as a nomadic people who wandered, to all appearances, aimlessly in the Sinai Peninsula for several years. The perspective of the people in Canaan changed from seeing Israel as returning to land their forefathers once ruled over to just freed slaves looking for a new home. I think it's safe to say even we see it a lot that way today, especially since that's not all that happened before Israel entered the promised land. Eventually they skirted the land they should have been living on until they met such resistance they had to drive out people living on the land to the east of the Jordan River before they ever crossed to it's west side. If we know our Bible stories you'll remember a later time this became an issue as this separation made it appear to those on the east they might not be remembered as part of the chosen nation. Thus, they built a monument at the Jordan to solidify and remind everyone they were still a part of the nation as much as those on the west side. This was looked at by those on the west side as an attempt to brake away from the nation which also meant turning from God. (Josh. 22) None of this type of confusion should have ever happened because none of Israel would have lived east of the Jordan River until long into their history when the nation simply grew to consume more land than just what's on the west side!

The chosen nation should have entered at the south end and grown into a nation that in time could have possessed the entire land of Canaan. Instead, they were almost forced to take the entire land right from the start and ended up so spread out that since they did not call upon The Name of The Lord as they should have, it made them vulnerable at every turn! In this we see how in our last segment we talked about an example of how our mistakes can be used for good if we are determined to cling to God, but be warned that we never know what we might have lost, for here we can talk about how a mistake dearly cost the chosen nation. We take it as a simple truth it happened the way it did but we can clearly see that was not what God was planning on happening, and the instability this brought to the early establishment of the chosen nation is something I could write a book on! However, getting back to what God was putting together here in the days of Isaac's life I want to make the note, all of what God accomplished in these days was not lost by Israel's early actions. The plan of God went ahead as God intended in all the important to this world ways, but the people through whom God was working suffered for not taking all the advantages God was baking into the plan so early on.

Thus, the list in verse 14 tells us Isaac, much like his father and even more so, would have conflict with the Philistines because God blessed him with such great possessions his house might as well have been a nation in those days/times. That point has a direct connection to what we talked about last time concerning how God put the fear of Isaac in the Philistines using this situation of Isaac going to Gerar. Yes, God gave Isaac great possessions which at first glance seem like what all pagans (and those who believe the theology known as "prosperity" today) are looking for in order to have proof a person is "living right," but the greater truth is that God was working so much more than just the fleeting meaning such blessings would have on Isaac's individual life. God blessed Isaac with such things for the same

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LXVII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

As we continue our look at the history that shows us how the Roman Empire came to be looked at as a Christian empire, last time we focused on the division of the empire into four parts and the fact that was a good thing. It was a good thing in that it officially ended the Crisis of the Third Century, as it's called by history, and thus began to restore Rome to more manageable pieces instead of one huge centralized power. What we really got into last time was how this should be seen by students of the Bible as not only an amazing proof God was right in putting things in our way from being one big centrally controlled world, but also the more important truths about how much what calls itself the church doesn't really get that point. That discussion took us what felt like a ways away from talking about the history of the Roman Empire, but in reality is a good example of how much this study isn't about a study of the empire, it's about seeing what its history shows us concerning the world we now live in. Such things have grave ramifications for true believers as we face the same struggles against oppression and the tendency to fall into the same pitfalls the chosen nation fell into. In the end result it shows us how much we need to focus on individually being people of faith and let that form what is the true church, not the church attempting to define what having faith is and means!

As we have looked down this long line of history that was the Roman Empire we have already seen many times the seeds of the empire becoming what Satan and evil men would use to corrupt the view of what the true church was/is. We have seen various rulers attempt to persecute Christians while others have been anything from tolerant to on the side of Christians. The problem is, we have not and will not see a leader of the Roman Empire who is truly an individual of faith who looks to God for guidance in how to run the empire. Instead, all we see are individuals who find ways to use the ideas behind Christianity as a tool to gain favor with the public or as a downright pagan power they can use to accomplish their desired goals. This is an important distinction and one we should be able to see if we look at things through Biblical eyes. I was reminded just the other day of how much people see this problem in the chosen nation's history and the troubling fact is that they don't see it as a problem. Many just see it as how it was and therefore how it was meant to be. To clarify what I'm trying to say, I'm talking about stories just as when Israel attempted to take the Ark of the Covenant into battle against the Philistines because they believed it would bring them victory. (I Sam. 4:3-9) The end result of that foolish thinking was God allowing the Ark to be captured by the Philistines.

The Philistines were shown how powerful God was by speaking to them through their pagan eyes by causing bad things

to happen to both the Philistines' idols as well as their physical health. The Philistines became sorry they ever took the Ark and sent it back to Israel by means that only God could have guided or the Ark wouldn't have made it back as it did, if at all. This is a great story for what I'm talking about because what we see in the simple boil down of that story is that Israel, who should have known better, treated the Ark as if it was a pagan power item they could use to accomplish their goal. It didn't work, but on the other side is the Philistines, who had no real reason to see it in any light other than that, found out just how much more powerful "The Ark" was than anything they worshiped as god(s)! So clearly we see in this story how God attempts to meet us where we are but at the same time expects us to advance in our understanding to better places. This directly relates to what we talked about in our last segment when discussing the church making salvation its god in place of God Himself. God doing what He did for Israel to free them from the bondage they suffered in Egypt was a way to meet the pagan thinking among the Egyptians as well as the Israelites. Many aspects of the Law relate to this same topic, but in the end of it all these are starting points to finding real faith and through that faith even greater understanding of Who God is and what He wants for each of us!

It was pretty far into the chosen nation's history that we see this incident with the Ark take place. They should have understood far better than their forefathers coming out of Egypt how much the Ark was part of a greater representation of God's desire to be Emmanuel which being interpreted means, God with us! (Matt. 1:18-25) When I say that, I'm not talking about the coming of The Messiah but the reason The Messiah came. God has, from the beginning of our creation, shown us how much He desires to be with us and among us. It is our refusal to maintain a place for His presence to dwell that inhibits that from being a physically obvious truth on this planet or anywhere else humans might one day venture. The Ark of the Covenant was important because it was the throne upon which God's physical presence would rest in this world, but only by being in the tabernacle, and later temple. Even at that it was in the Holy of Holies which is a pretty obvious way of saying the most holy place of the temple. It was also to be seen as the most holy place on the planet which is important to human thinking. The tabernacle/temple was surrounded by curtains/walls to form a courtyard where the priests constantly ministered before The Lord. This courtyard also served as a path to approach for individuals of the nation to come before God's physical presence.

Just that description in short form as I put it there seems rather arduous and it was meant to be. It physically demonstrates how far removed the greater world of sin is from having the physical presence of God among us. The layer I didn't even mention in that description is that the tabernacle, and later temple, were to be in the midst of the most holy people/nation in the world! Before you think that violates what I've taught in other places about understanding the Law didn't force all the people of

the nation to be righteous for the nation to have value in showing forth the things of God, understand there is a clear difference between righteousness and holiness. Holiness was/is things like the burning bush Moses encountered one day as he tended his father-in-law's flocks. When Moses attempted to approach this physical presence of God he was told to take the shoes from his feet because he was on holy ground. (Ex. 3:1-6) We don't know the exact place of that bush and for good reason because people would want to worship it like they seek to worship any number of things. However, the greater point is that the ground was holy because it was the place around the presence of God so He could appear to Moses in/as a burning bush!

This means the ground was exactly what we should know the definition of the word "holy" to be; something separated for the purposes of God. There was nothing more righteous about the ground around that bush or the bush itself compared to any other ground in the area or world for that matter. That said, it was holy in that moment because for the period of time God's presence was there to meet with Moses, it was truly separated from the outside and surrounding world/ground to specifically be used for the purposes of God. This is the distinction we should be able to make when talking about the chosen nation along with the elements of the Law God put among them such as, the tabernacle/temple and the Ark of the Covenant. All these things and the land God promised to give the chosen nation was and still is separated for the purposes of God. We don't know for sure where all or any of the physical objects ended up, including the fact earthly things turn to dust, but we know who the people are and where the promised land is. When we look at the secular nature of the chosen nation as it exists today we must understand a ton of righteousness is lacking but the fact they are still holy and the ground of the promised land is too, should never be forgotten!

It always takes so long to make a point in these discussions because men are not holy nor righteous and even those who claim to be have been a great amount of what has corrupted right thinking when it comes to the things of God. Thus, we cover a lot of ground to be sure people are all on the right thinking when it comes to the details we use to make a Biblical point. Now that's arduous and can clearly be seen as corruption of man and his ways which serves in and of itself as another example of how hard it has been for God to be among us other than being with certain individuals who have true faith. Faith is where it is all meant to lead because faith isn't just what we grow into, it's what causes us to grow continually but only if we let it! God is always willing to meet us where we are as a way to reach out to us and bring us back to faith and from there, through and on to where faith can take us. This in a nutshell is what God was doing in forming the chosen nation and giving them the Law which led to having physical elements such as the Ark of the Covenant.

As much as it's a truth we see in things such as Moses' face glowing being an example of how God's power can inundate and linger on/with objects He is close to, the Ark had not seen God's Physical presence rest upon it, as was suppose to happen, since the days of Joshua or shortly thereafter. (Ex. 34:29-35) When the Israelites took it into battle hoping it alone would give them the victory over the Philistines it was truly an ignorant act God deemed them far enough along in their development to be

responsible for knowing. The Philistines on the other hand looked at the Ark like they would have seen any pagan idol or "special" artifact. Due to this, having the Ark did Israel no good but the Philistines got to see the power of God by having it in their possession. This rings true when we look at the Philistines putting the Ark on a cart pulled by cattle that had never pulled a cart before, and instead of that being a disaster the cattle did a perfect job of pulling the cart from the Philistines' territory, across the border and back into Israel's control. We should ask ourselves, how did the Philistines get the Ark home after they took it in battle? How did they get it into the temple of their god, and how did they place it on the cart that took it home to Israel? No matter what care they may or may not have taken in each of these tasks, we see them able to move the Ark around. Transversely, when the Ark ends up back in Israel, mishandling it is judged swiftly!

Again, in this we see how much Israel was held responsible for thinking of the Ark incorrectly when on many levels and ways the Philistines "got away" with doing such things. So the moral of the story is clear, respect the things God has proclaimed holy, and the more we understand or stand in a position to understand the ways and nature of God the more we are held responsible for such things. In spite of the story clearly showing us all this, people, even people who are suppose to be teachers of the next generation of Christian teachers and preachers, will often see it from a different angle and believe the very same wrong thing Israel believed and the story shows us was their downfall. People can look at the Ark as a source of power that brought great things to Israel. The pillar of cloud by day and fire by night that led Israel even before the Ark was made, came to use the Ark as the place the pillar rested when Israel was not on the move. Surely this shows the Ark to be an item of power. The Ark was used to drive back the waters of the mighty Jordan River and allow the chosen nation to officially enter the promised land! (Josh. 3:7-17) Surely these things show the Ark to be a source of power. Therefore it only stands to reason Israel was correct in thinking the Ark would bring them victory in battle, right? All totally wrong!

The Ark itself was never the source of power or an item that in and of itself was able to produce any power. The Ark only had power for two reasons. One, God's presence had saturated it early on, but like Moses' face, any energy that saturation gave the Ark would fade if not continually renewed. That's a whole other lesson I could write on, about how we should remain close to God and not believe knowing Him and/or walking with Him for any time gives us some permanent power we can use as we please. The same can be said for what calls itself the church and "power" position individuals can hold within it. However, we'll move on. The second way the Ark had power was in what God had caused through His actions in telling Moses how to make it along with the position it held within the chosen nation's organization. This is a position of respect, but again does not speak to the Ark ever having power of its own. Yet many people still believed/believe it did/does. They also believe if someone or some organization could get their hands on it, it would give them an "edge," to say the least! This has been and will continue to be a problematic thought humans have. The question persists in the minds of men, how can I harness the power of God and use it for what I want? The answer is, you can't! When we ask anything of God it must be asked in His name which is a way of saying we

are asking for the will of God to be done. (John 14:13-14) We do this either by asking for it directly because we know the will of God in a particular situation or asking it as Jesus instructed us to ask in the model prayer He gave us. (Luke 11:2) That is ask for God's will to be done in spite of us not knowing exactly what that is!

All this relates directly to what we are talking about in looking at how the Roman Empire eventually came to be known as a "Christian Empire" and the fact man would desire to take that empire into the future as a way to better humanity. In our last segment we talked about what an egregious mistake it was for the religious leaders of the Jews to believe so much in their own thoughts they rejected The Messiah, not because they didn't believe Jesus was The Messiah but because Jesus was not The Messiah they wanted. However, as big a mistake as that was, it will be an even more overwhelming mistake for what calls itself the church to believe it can take over the world even from the administration of The Messiah when He is physically, once again, on this earth ruling this earth from His throne in the city of Jerusalem! What is becoming more obvious by the day, week, and year is how much not just the seeds of those very far off future actions are being planted but how much the full fruit of those seeds are already coming quickly to their first ripe state! It seems almost beyond comprehension for a lot of people, especially those who claim to be Christians, to even consider, much less believe, that's true. However, it is, and it is most true within the teachings of the Christian religion of today.

This isn't just because what calls itself Christian and the religion it rules over is seen arising out of the failing of man's last great attempt at regaining the Tower of Babel's goal, that being the Roman Empire, it's because people, generation after generation, continue to believe in the same failed ideas which have their roots in the Tower of Babel. It's why the Tower is something I talk about so much. It's not just something to rant about or fill the pages of a publication I'm responsible for filling. It's not about furthering some agenda that at times can appear to some to be mine and mine alone. It's because it's the truth and something believers need to understand! The fact it's as it was in the days of Noah far more than people will allow themselves to wake up and realize is why there are so few of us who can articulate it. Those of us who do are not quacks, nutty, out of our head, or simply self centered egotistic crackpots because we are by far in the minority for saying such things. The fact Jesus told us His return would be a time when it was once more as that time only one man found grace in the eyes of The Lord is the proof of why it's true. (Gen. 6:5-8, Matt. 24:36-42) You can believe it or not, but the same way what calls itself the church today can find the roots of its downfall in what happened centuries ago when religious leaders rose to kill The Messiah of their own nation, those people who will rise up against Jesus and His rulership of/on this earth a thousand years after Satan is put in the bottomless pit have their roots in what is being taught right now! (Rev. 20) Understand that simple fact and the representation of events in Revelation will be clearer to you all the way around.

These stories of what happened during the Roman Empire and far earlier than the existence of said empire are not old, they are the here and now. That's not because the same exact physical circumstances exist now but because humanistic thinking has not changed since it came to its very mature formed

state we see at the Tower of Babel. That moment in time when God came down and determined what He did at the Tower and confounded our language due to it, is the moment in time when the die was cast on this world needing to come to a total and complete end one day. It's the moment that solidified no matter what God did there would one day be the absolute necessity for a new heaven and a new earth to replace this current one as the place God could dwell among us. Many would disagree with me on that and say it was the moment we took of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil but if that had been true, it is under that circumstance we can say, God wouldn't have given us the tree to begin with! Yes, the tree's fruit changed our course but it didn't doom our universe. Yes, it was the first and great act of sin which is rebellion against God, but forgiveness has always been in God's power. He has demonstrated it over and over through time. God was still with us and for us and wanting us to succeed, the vast majority of humans just didn't want the same thing.

Instead, the vast majority believed wallowing in the pleasures of sin for the short season our mortality allows was what they wanted. That truth is what led to the flood. The realization humans came to that they couldn't just repeat that mistake is what caused there to be formulated a plan to build on this earth a power base for humanity so that we might be able to keep God from destroying us as He had with the flood. It was that basic thought that led to the cry, let us go and build for us a city and a tower to reach heaven so we may plan our cumulative human destiny before a multitude of independent ideas destroys that ability once we are spread across the world. (Gen. 11:1-4) Once that plan was formed and to a great degree accomplished (as much as that was possible), we showed ourselves able to move through the centuries, not in a world where the truth of what we wanted to accomplish could be brought to fruition, but in a world where the full blinding of the truth of our failure could persist through all generations. God had given us a free will which included the ability to choose how many more humans we would share this universe with through the process of procreation. His hope was that we would develop and advance into a world who understood so greatly our need to live our lives alongside His, He would forever be able to be our Emmanuel. When we took of the fruit of the tree He told us not to take of, the plan was not lost but it did solidify certain individuals among us would be!

That truth grew to be so great there was no need for us to continue existing and that's what brought about the flood, but even then God was desirous to give us another chance. It was for this cause we have a story about Noah finding grace in the eyes of The Lord and building an ark that would ultimately save him and his family, instead of Noah's life being the same short verse as Enoch's, which was that he walked with God and God simply took him from this world. (Gen. 5:24) We see in what I just said the truth it's always been about the individual but when it comes to saving this world, this universe, as a physical place where we could one day walk with God as He once did in the Garden of Eden, God gave us as humanity a fresh chance to accomplish it by sparing humanity (as we know it in this world) from coming to an end. The caveat was God decided post-flood He would not continue to destroy all of humanity and much of the physical planet over and over to accomplish that goal! (Gen. 8:20-22) That is a very important point to keep in mind if you want to

understand why I say we sealed this world's fate at the Tower of Babel because, what did we do with the second chance God gave us? The minute we began to feel power in the numbers of a growing population we turned to the belief, centralization of our power would be our salvation. We weaved that belief into such a good cloak, it could have fooled every individual of every generation for eternity. God said He would not destroy us again like He had by sending the flood, thus without literally reaching in and reprogramming us to forget what those at the tower worked to create in the minds of humans, all hope this place could be the place of our eternal existence came to an end.

With all this there are those who are asking how could it ever have been that when people have been dying ever since we took of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil? The answer lays in the very thing the church claims to be in most anticipation of happening! Those who have walked in faith; in other words, those who have desired even in this life they would fight against all the odds to have God in their lives but who have along with many others died, will one day be resurrected. It's a truth the Sadducees of Jesus' day denied as being something able to happen, and now you might begin to see why that was such a problem! The Pharisees believed it was possible and when Jesus was asked a question meant to trip Him up about how that will be handled when it happens Jesus didn't deny in any way the resurrection was real. Instead, He explained how little they understood about what that happening had come to mean. (Matt. 22:23-33) Understand, the greatest teachers of the Law and the Prophets understood how much the possibility of this earth being our eternal home had been a possibility but they did not understand how solidified it had become that, that could no longer happen. Jesus helped us understand that being born again meant more than just resurrection from the dead; it means literally one day all old things pass away and all things will become new!

We see the truth they did believe using this earth was something God had originally strove for in both the question they asked Jesus that day as well as the one Nicodemus asks Jesus under the cover of darkness another day. (John 3:1-21) Nicodemus asks how can a man be saved because they struggled with the question of how people have been dying since the time we took of the forbidden fruit; no matter if they did or did not walk in faith. That is to say, they knew Noah was dead; Job was dead; so was Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! How Master, tell us how can that be reversed? How can that damage be undone? Jesus' answer to that was the fact a man must be born again, and this immediately caused Nicodemus to ask a question that was based totally on the thought here and now would be our eternal home. He asks Jesus, how can a man enter his mother's womb a second time and be born again? Now, I've taught on what Jesus said to this many times, so let me state what Jesus was saying in light of our current discussion. Jesus tells Nicodemus God created this world, this universe. We don't really grasp that and how could we? The power to do such a thing is outside our comprehension! Thus, the answer to how God will handle the fact people who walk in faith have and will die is that - God has created for the purpose of creating us once before and He is more than capable of creating once again for the purpose of holding on to us!

Oh how I wish every believer could grasp the fullness of what we are discussing here! It would change the way you see this world. It would transform the way you see God, His nature, the reason He created us the way He did and why He has taken the actions He has taken among us! In spite of there being no hope left that the here and now could ever be our eternal home (which was something the chosen nation had not grasp by the time The Messiah first appeared and which will be the same reason they flock to Him when He returns in the manner He will return), the plan of God goes on unfazed on many levels. There will still be a resurrection of all those who have walked in faith. Amazing as it seems, at that time of Jesus' second appearing there will even be a transformation of those walking in faith who are still alive and remain on this earth! (I Thes. 4:13-18) A transformation you ask, into what? Into the answer of what Jesus meant when He said a man must be born again! There will be, in those days, living proof God is able to do what Jesus told Nicodemus He would do! If that doesn't seem obvious and intuitive it's because you have been wrongly taught by what calls itself the church to think of being born again as the same thing they worship, which is salvation itself. Pagan corruption of the truth of God's Word can be the only logical reason for why the church generally rejects and/or totally misunderstands the mission of the chosen nation while at the same time teaches much of the same fallacy they believed which led to the crucifixion of The Messiah almost two thousand years ago! If you understand what I just said, you should be able to see how much more correct the religious leaders of the chosen nation were in having that confusion than anything calling itself Christian does.

Simply put, there is a need for those who have walked in faith to ultimately be saved from this world in order for our lives to continue in a way that will be able to walk with God for eternity. That's the part Christians generally get but being born again is only one element of what makes that possible. By putting such a focus on salvation instead of faith we totally misunderstand the concern the Jews of Jesus' day had about walking with God in the here and now, yet death still taking people of faith every single day. We're so into believing we, post Jesus' first appearing, are born again in the here and now, we've all but forgotten the truth faith is the reason to want to be saved and why God is willing to one day rebirth us at all. We're waiting for that day God will take us to our eternal home believing our ticket has already been punched when salvation is nothing more than how God will continue the existence of those who have wanted what He created us to have from day one and that's to be God with us! Waiting for the great day of The Lord is only to say we need to be ready but we don't get ready by focusing on that day. We get, and stay, ready by being the people who strive every day to have Emmanuel as individuals, in spite of what the world has or wants! (I Cor. 6:12-20)

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by
Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 4

reason He had blessed Abraham with them. It's the same reason God did and wanted to so much more bless the later chosen nation with wealth. These are the things pagans are impressed with and God was speaking to them in a language they would understand! That point also directly relates to what we see happening today in what we call the Middle East. The world responds like never before to military might, and in spite of its size Israel has been blessed with an abundance of it. This has been seen since the very first wars broke out immediately following the establishment of the modern state!

That's really the second point as to why we see this list in verse 14. It must be pointed out Isaac as an individual believer in God was blessed with such things because God knew He could give them to him, and like his father Abraham such blessings would not throw Isaac off his walk of faith like it can and does so easily do to so many individuals. This rings true in the next generation of the family as we see Jacob given great wealth without it throwing him off, and at the same time his brother Esau took what he was blessed with and chose to live a life so totally separate from the plan of God, he ended up becoming a nation of people whom God would have to punish in later times. No clearer example of this fact is in the time Israel needed to pass through their territory as they skirted the promised land and the Edomites resisted them in the same way or worse than any Canaanites or others in the region. It was not God's intent Israel harm the descendants of Esau in any way, but the fact Israel needed to go in that direction made the way for Israel much harder. (Num. 20:14-21) Simply put, Jacob's family went on to be the people who knew God while Esau's family was devoid of even the fear of God. What God blesses us with and what He chooses not to bless us with does have to do with whether or not we are walking in the plan of God or straying from the course, but far more than that it has to do with what God wants to accomplish with and through our lives. This means just as we see by course of nature and politics in the rest of the world's population, some who walk in true faith will be blessed with great wealth while others will not. Wealth simply is not a gauge by which to judge how much or how little; how good or how poorly; someone is walking with God!

Now let's get to a specific we are given in verse 14 that has a direct connection to talking about God using Isaac's life to speak to pagan minds in a language they understand. The physical blessings God gave Isaac were so great that again, in spite of them being an entire nation of people and Isaac being one small family, Isaac's possessions made the Philistines jealous. "Enviied" is the specific word used in the King James Version, and it's important to see God was testing the Philistines here. When I get to teaching on such subjects I just can't hardly believe the argument we are in today about there supposedly being a people living among and in proximity to the chosen nation which are descendants of the Philistines. They are a political thorn in Israel's side, to put it lightly, but we must understand that was the point of proclaiming a particular group of people living on the promised land in our modern era, descendants of the Philistines. For the Romans it was simply a way to attempt to erase the connection the land itself had to the chosen nation. They didn't attempt to re-brand a certain group of people with the name Palestine, they just wanted to call the land

of Israel something other than the land of Israel. Now here's the kicker when it comes to what they did, the Romans couldn't find a people of enough prominence who lived on/in the area, other than the chosen nation, that they could use those people's name to call the land.

They did at times attempt to use the name Syria but it just so clearly didn't apply to the all important southern end the chosen nation held onto with a firm grasp since the time of their return from Babylon. The Romans knew the Syria name would not stick in the South and renaming the South was so important that it outweighed even attempting to keep the Syrian name to define some of the North. Thus, the solution the Romans came up with was to reach back into the past for the name of a people who had been known in the South. The name Canaan was too general and too clearly known to be the people the Israelites had originally displaced. Since the Hebrew Bible, which today Christians call The Old Testament, was a well known historical document, Canaan just couldn't be used. They needed a people known in history to rival Israel and be solidly southern people. They needed this because they both wanted the name to have staying power among people coming into the land they were driving the Jews out of, and the Romans also wanted a name the remaining Jews would disdain the land being known as. This second point would irritate any remaining Jewish communities and the Roman's hoped that would give such communities an incentive to leave the land of their own choosing. This is why renaming the promised land, both South and North, the "Land of the Philistines" was the logical choice for the Romans.

What's amazing about the way this moved forward is that it would only have been natural for people living in the area to simply begin identifying themselves as "Palestinians" not because they believed they had a connection back to the Philistines but because they lived on a land called Palistine. However, even that didn't happen! The ethnic identities people were born with persisted so well for people they continued to identify by them, and almost no one was even known as a Palestinian as an individual much less any large group. You might find some passing reference to Palestinian people in the writings of people talking about their travel to or through the area simply because it was an easier way to refer to all the groups living across the land, but such references are few and based on nothing other than convenience for the writer. Such convenience along with a virtual worship of the long lost dream that was the Roman Empire cause the Roman's re-branding of the land as a territory to persist right up to our modern age. This, not the idea there were people considered Palestinian, is why you see "Palestine" listed on things such as maps of the region which were made over the years. If labeling the area Palestine was good enough for the Romans (remembering even this was only the very latter part of the empire) then it was good enough for a lot of later people making maps and referring in general to the area.

Another fact is that the so called barbarians who ultimately brought down the great Romans, and ironic as it may seem furthered the Christian religion through the "Holy Roman Empire" idea, were actually some of the most ignorant of the Hebrew Bible people in the world! Even in the tumultuous time of the Greeks there was interest in the Hebrew Bible if for no

other reason than it's historical, chronological, and general literary value. This is where the Septuagint comes from (which was the first widely accepted translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language and which is still highly respected today in many circles). However, the barbarians were lucky to take on Latin which was the language of the Romans. Languages such as Greek were not more widely studied until after the time referred to as the "Dark Ages," speaking from a European standpoint. In spite of the truth Europe finally saw what history calls the Renaissance which brought a renewed interest in education, arts and such, there was a great deal lost to the "Darkness" of the previous age. As the Europeans begin to get on their intellectual feet, they did so with the help of remaining Roman records and knowledge. A fragment here and a fragment there was all that was left of some records, and this caused an age of exploration for Europeans to find more of what was lost. As they explored they began to visit and map far off lands which to the Greeks and Romans had simply been the world in which they lived and ruled. The Europeans would, once again, get a handle on where some of these places were they saw on/in remaining Roman records. To connect such places with the records they logically used the names the Romans had called them.

There is even the anti-Semitic factor in why the name "Palestine" persisted. Europe was birthed to be the Holy Roman Empire or what some might more descriptively, in spite of not being more accurately, called the "Christian Empire." The problem was/is, people often derived their power among men from the gods or that was how it was/is looked at from the days of the Tower of Babel. This is part of the reason people had/have gods of their own making. They are their gods and they give them power. If you defeat an enemy it meant your gods were/more powerful than their gods or that their gods had turned against them allowing you, if not helping you, win. This is why the gods of defeated people are destroyed or many times collected by the victors. This truth is seen throughout all recorded history with the exception of the Hebrew Bible's beginning chapters which show us people early on understood there to be only One True God! In the ways the growing consuming religion of Christianity knew and understood the Hebrew Bible, along with The New Testament, they clearly saw the Jews were the chosen nation of God. If the Christian Empire was going to have power it could not acquiesce to the Jews with the understanding we can all be the people of God but only they are the chosen nation of God.

Pagan thinking said God had to belong to the victors and as the Christian Empire saw it, that was them. They could do what they could in locking away the Hebrew Bible from the larger population of the church but Christianity has no meaning whatsoever without the Jewish Messiah. Thus, a course was taken to downplay as much as possible the truth Jesus Himself was a Jew but there was no possible way to disconnect Jesus from the promised land! This is the kind of thing I'm talking about when I say we need to know our entire Bible, for only through that can we really make sense of Its stories and why God preserved the history He preserved in His Word. While Jesus' parents would raise Him in the north part of the promised

land, the wonderment of Christ's birth is that they were forced to travel back south to the city of the great Jewish King David and burial place of Rachel, that being Bethlehem. (Gen. 35:16-20, I Sam. 16:1-13) There Jesus would be born and He would be taken to the temple in Jerusalem as all Jewish boys were to be taken when they are eight days old. (Luke 2:21-38) About the furthest Jesus ever traveled in His life was the short stay in Egypt while his parents waited for King Herod to die. (Matt. 2) I say all that to point out it's hard to make Jesus the center of your religion and not acknowledge the land He did all His great works in. However, those of the Christian religion didn't want to call it Israel or Judea or even the "Promised Land" because the promise was to the chosen nation and Christians were taught they were the replacement of the chosen nation.

Thus, Christians mostly know and refer to the area as "The Holy Land." This is one of those neat tricks the church tries to play because if you kick against it in anyway they can point out it's not wrong to call it The Holy Land. No, it's not wrong, it's just far more advantageous for the church to say the land was/is set apart for the purposes of God than it was/is to acknowledge it was promised to the chosen nation. In so doing, it meant (and in some ways still means) if the crusaders could conquer the land it would belong to the church proving once and for all they really had replaced the chosen nation. This means early on what calls itself the church was in no way going to enter the secular arena and insist the land not be called Palestine. They had no more interest in calling the land Israel or Judea than the latter Romans. This fact and the truth the church went with the name Holy Land persisted right up to and through the formation of the modern state of Israel. It's another one of those stunning facts that most people proclaiming Christianity think nothing of!

Again, there's nothing wrong with saying the land belongs to the purposes of God and as such is holy. The problem is the way it reinforced so many generations to not think about the land as being promised to the chosen nation. Since the secular side of humanity isn't going to refer to the land as holy, the name Palestine was also going to persist. Does this sound like the church doing the work of God? Maybe, but only if you believe in replacement theology. That is to say, Christians might acknowledge the land was originally promised to Israel but since the church is the new Israel, the land should come along with it. The fact God is still on the same track He was on when He made, even in the secular eyes of the Philistines, Isaac a great man, is the reason that hasn't become the church's reality. Shall we resist and question the legitimacy of the existence of the modern state of Israel and the fact it has rewritten our modern world putting "Israel" on the map once again? Should we find any reason we can to support people calling themselves Palestinians as a way to stand in the way of God bringing His chosen nation back to the land? People can seemingly muddy the waters with all kinds of arguments but since the days of the true Philistines and the forefathers of Israel, God has made His intent clear. The only question that remains is, whose side are you on?

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

to Naomi, and in turn the chosen nation and us. If Ruth had been like her sister-in-law there would be no story. If she hadn't loved her mother-in-law enough to follow her instructions that too would have meant no story. Ruth had to be the virtuous woman she was for this story of Naomi's life to end up being recorded as a book of the Bible. It's why Ruth's name is the book's name, but Naomi is the reason it's important to us today. I don't really know for sure if what I'm trying to say is sinking in or not, but it's my hope it is because it's why we see this generic reference to "the woman" instead of specifically Ruth in these last few verses of the book. It might have been any woman involved in the birth of Naomi's grandson who spoke these words but it wasn't just any woman, it was - the woman - who spoke them. To me that can only be Ruth! In spite of what we touched on last segment about Mahlon's name not going forward because it was the blessing of God on Boaz that he be recorded as the great grandfather of King David, here we see the book named for the great grandmother of King David emphasizing his great great grandmother Naomi was just as important to why this family line of people would be the family through whom The Messiah would one day come!

Thus, it was Ruth's turn to proclaim a blessing here in verses 14 and 15, and she would begin by blessing The Lord. In all things give thanks unto The Lord for His mercy endures forever! (Ps. 136, I Thes. 5:18) God's mercy on a life, on a family, is what this entire story is all about. Because they were the people of faith they turned out to be, God's mercy to His chosen nation, and yes the world, would come through them! Ruth declares that God had not left Naomi without an inheritance in Israel. Ruth could have been selfish and thought of this child as her blessing, but her first thought is for Naomi and what it meant among the chosen nation that Naomi's family not die out. Of course, Ruth's blessing that the child's name would be famous in Israel is exactly like those who declared the blessing on Boaz and Ruth at the gate of the city; it was more true than they could have imagined on that day! The fact this child meant so much to Naomi is why he really was the "restorer of life" to Naomi as Ruth proclaims next. In those dark days of watching her husband die and then her sons, taking what she could carry and putting her feet on the path back to Israel, Naomi had to believe her life was over. Not literally in that she wouldn't make it back to Israel, though that was a possibility, but in that she had nothing to look forward to. The fact she was too old to have more sons is specifically in her words to her daughters-in-law as she implores them to stay in Moab. All she had done in getting married, having children, and building a life was over, but here before her was the grandchild that in those dark days she could not have dreamed she'd one day see! Ruth also calls her son a "nourisher" of Naomi's old age. Not only had Naomi's life turned out to mean something special after all, Naomi had lived long enough to enjoy the fruits of that something! The next things are really things only Ruth could have said because only she could have assured Naomi of her unflinching love. Ruth refers to herself in the third person to declare that love and the fact she gave Naomi something she might not have had even if she had, had seven sons. I'll just point out it was no coincidence that Ruth uses the number seven because it's another sign Ruth had absorbed the traditions of the chosen nation. The number seven is God's number of

completion for this creation and Ruth is really pointing out how complete she had, by some great blessing from The Lord, been able to make Naomi's life!

It is with that we move on to verse 16 where we are told Naomi took the baby in her arms and got to be the grandmother she always wanted to be. She would have a hand in raising this child whose life would go on to bring about the birth of a king in the nation as well as The King of Kings in the future. I've said it all along, this story is so much about showing us the importance of living our lives in the ways of God and trusting whether we get to see the great blessings or not, we just never know what God will accomplish through those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28) There are a great many stories in the Bible which bring out the very human part of the life we all live but only this book is totally dedicated to it. All the other books that bear the name of an individual are about that individual's struggle to do the things of God they have been called to do. That certainly is the case when talking about the books named for the prophets, but even a book like Esther is about the idea the person was put where they were for, "such a time as this." (Esth. 4:14) Ruth is purely about people just trying to live their lives on a day by day basis. Lives that were on many levels filled with most people's greatest fears yet, it is a story that tells of amazing things God did using just those everyday lives!

Verse 17 is where we see Ruth, along with Naomi's neighbors, would come up with a name for this child and the name would have special meaning to the fact God had given Naomi a son. That name was Obed. If you look up this name you will likely find references to the name meaning something because of who this Obed was. You'll find things such as it means, "Servant of God" or "worshiper." You may also find the fact this name shows up as the name of five men in total who are mentioned by name in the Bible. Many of these men did service to the nation of some kind. However, the etymology of the name in Hebrew means simple "servant" or can even mean "slave," which is why we say the name now means something like servant of God. This is how language morphs. A word has a certain meaning to the people of a certain time period and then one day something happens that is either major enough to be the reason all on its own or little by little it causes people to use the word to mean something exclusive to a certain event, person, etc. and many times forget what the original meaning was. For example, the Hebrew word "matztzah" literally means "juiceless" (we might say something such as "dried out" in English), and that's how the word came to refer to "unleavened bread." This is why today we used the word "matzoh" to specifically describe the flat pieces of unleavened bread that are eaten during The Feast of Unleavened Bread. The feast's name in more of a Hebrew form is Hag HaMatzot, but because the unleavened bread is the main thing mentioned in the feast's title the feast itself has simply come to often be called just Matzot.

The same kind of thing is true of Hanukkah. The word "Hanukkah" at some point in history simply meant "dedication" in Hebrew, but that word all by itself came to be used exclusively as the feast's name. In English the name of the feast is actually "The Feast of Dedication," and with another "the" involved that's how we see it referred to in John 10:22.

However, English loves to adopt words from everywhere, so it was easy for even English speaking people to cast aside the English version of the feast's name and accept the condensed form of Hanukkah as well. Especially among non-Jews, even the vast majority of those who claim to be Christians, people have no idea what the word originally meant. They simply see Hanukkah as the name of a celebration the Jews hold every year; usually around the time the rest of the world is celebrating Christmas, which is the shortened version of saying, "Christ's Mass." That's also something most who call themselves Christians don't know and/or never give much thought to, but that's a whole other story. The point that's important for us here is that we don't really know what the name Obed meant to those who named the child but we know that it had some meaning to the fact he was a child born to Naomi, or to say it another way, important to Naomi. Again, in this we see how much the emphasis is on Naomi and her life having meaning. Does this mean the name doesn't really mean "servant"? Not really because it's very possible that's why they used it, but it would have been to them in the context of saying this child's life had served the purpose of bringing new life to Naomi's life. The difference might seem small, but it's important we understand the name was picked for that reason.

The end of verse 17 lays out the all important genealogy which shows us the reason this story was included in the Scripture. That's the fact Obed was the father of Jesse and Jesse was the father of King David. That said, this story is also included in Scripture because it's such an amazing story about people who as both individuals and a group lived lives they had set apart for the purposes of God. If we really put those thoughts together we see something I've noted since I was very young, and that's the advantage to a Godly heritage. Children must choose to use that advantage but it's there for the taking. Humans love/hate that some people are born into the privilege of having certain breeding and we're all pretty familiar with the idea certain people are considered royalty, not because they themselves did anything special but because of the family they were born into. While this is the most prominent example of the thought, you don't have to have such an official example to find yourself thinking people are born to certain things. This kind of thought in the human mind drives the way people see others, but far more than it should it also drives how we as individuals see ourselves! If parents will fight to pass down to their child a Godly heritage, their children have not just the same advantages children of the chosen nation had/have, like a solid knowledge of God's Word, but an understanding of how much God is their God and wants to be in their lives if they'll let Him. The full advantage of this is found in parents being sure their children understand they are not in some automatic special standing just because their parents serve The Lord, but they do have the advantage of learning the truth about what God wants for their lives from an earlier age. Teach your children to see it, not as something that makes them better than others, for it can easily be lost, but as a gift their life has been blessed with. If they hold onto God with all their might, no matter where they come from, it's something they can pass on to their children as well!

In spite of human thought, heredity is likely only one

piece of a very large puzzle as to why people are what they are and who they are. These are things only God knows, but that's the point of the story we see in Ruth. Ruth did not have a Godly heritage in anyway we know of. However, she grew to be as good a wife, as good a daughter-in-law as anyone of the chosen nation could hope to find because she loved God! Boaz loved God too and even if you don't think we can say all that without reservation, they certainly both loved the Law of God enough to respect what it was trying to do in and with the chosen nation. No matter where they came from, together they would pass on to their son a Godly heritage. That is to say, an example of being a believer, and that gave Obed a good foundation to go forward with his life being that example as well. It simply would be up to him as to if he took advantage of it or not, but it would appear he passed it on to Jesse who in turn was able to pass it on to David. In the eyes of the world David might not have been the tallest and strongest but he didn't care about this world's thoughts. Who David was as an individual, along with his love for God and His ways is what made David not just a shepherd boy but the right man for the job to one day be the king of the nation!

This is why the Book of Ruth ends by giving us the genealogy of Boaz and it appears to go back six generations before him. Some people dispute that these are really father to son relationships given as apposed to just the hitting of highlights of notable people so as to trace back to the son of Judah we talked about in another segment as being very well known. I don't really think the latter is the case, but if you believe it's true then you must also believe it's true of the genealogy given at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew. There we see these same names with slight variation in how they were spelled but the spelling is no surprise considering Ruth was originally written in very early Hebrew and translated into English from the surviving texts of much later Hebrew; whereas the genealogy given in Matthew is translated from Greek. In ancient languages names were often recognized for what they meant and the word/name meaning the same thing in the new language would be used in writing. The point is, the names are the same in Ruth as Matthew in spite of the spelling and Matthew records it as fourteen generations from Abraham to David. Choose to believe it or make up your own story but the Bible gives accurate records so we may know the past better than many people who claim to actually study it believing they know differently. The important question in our conversation here and as we finish our look at the Book of Ruth is, what, if any, advantage did Boaz have in his heritage? We don't know for sure but because his actions, along with Naomi's and Ruth's, were Godly, God made them all part of the line and lineage of The Messiah. Boaz's genealogy is given so later people/books could record the fact The Messiah came through the line of people God promised He would come through. Thus, Matthew later traces the genealogy all the way to Joseph, the earthly father of The Messiah. The Book of Ruth reminds us all that God has and will continue to use His chosen nation for His purposes, but He also uses all those who love Him no matter from what family or nation they come!

Let's stay in God's Word!

