



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

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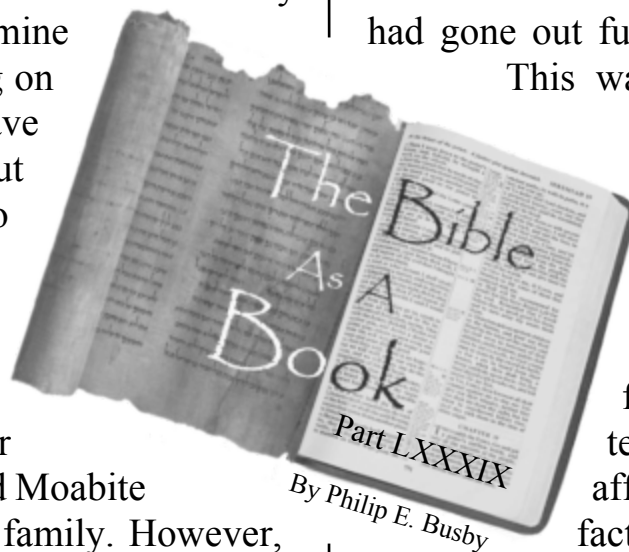
Last segment began our overview of the Book of Ruth, and we started by covering the fact the core family the story starts with came from Bethlehem which before the conquest of Canaan was called Ephrath. This explained why the family was called Ephrathites. From Bethlehem the family goes to Moab because they hoped to escape a famine that was currently going on in Israel. They might have escaped the famine but what we saw happen to them in Moab was quite bad in spite of that. The father of the family named Elimelech died, and after this his two sons married Moabite women to continue the family. However, before either of them had children both the sons died leaving their mother Naomi as the last remaining member of the family that had moved here. She would hear of better conditions back in Israel and head out for Bethlehem. Her two daughters-in-law would follow, but after talking to them about the bleakness of a future with her, one of them turned back as Naomi had suggested. The remaining daughter-in-law, Ruth would

refuse to turn back and go with Naomi. We ended last segment with these two women reaching Bethlehem and Naomi beginning to tell what had befallen her family. That brought us through Ruth chapter 1 verse 20, and we are ready to begin verse 21 this time.

Naomi told her friends and family she had gone out full but came back empty.

This was part of her argument about not calling her Naomi any longer because, as we covered last time, that name means "pleasant" or "delightful." Now she feels like God had testified against her and afflicted her. God had in fact done just that, but that is

not to say God had anything to do with specifically causing her husband and sons to die. It simply means God did nothing to keep those events from happening. It was wrong for them as a family of the chosen nation to move to Moab. However, God's Law was designed not to keep people trapped in the nation but to say if you don't want to be a part of the plan God had set out for the nation, be sure



to leave. This is a fact many people don't understand about the Law. Thus, Naomi and her family were perfectly free to leave the nation but with the understanding that once they were lost to the wider world that was what they chose for themselves. Again, we don't know Naomi's specific thoughts on this but she did recognize God had certainly not blessed her family's move to Moab. So now Naomi and Ruth were back to live in Bethlehem because if nothing else, it was a place where Naomi had family. Ruth came specifically because she wanted what Naomi's family had left and she had no idea all that God had in store for her life!

Now, it's totally true we don't know for sure what Ruth felt either. As we said, maybe she just wanted to follow Naomi, but I doubt that. Ruth shows too much determination to leave her homeland and live in Israel. She was at the beginnings of finding out the Law allowed people to join the nation who were not blood born Jews but only if they would fully commit to the Law God had asked the Jews to commit to. Ruth had said all the right words and done all the right things to show she was willing and desirous. This is what God looks for. We don't have to have all the knowledge and understanding to begin with. What we need to have and keep is a heart ready to receive and do what God wants for our lives. Ruth had such a heart and she would take on this new beginning with earnest. Speaking of new beginnings, we are told Naomi and Ruth return to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. If you study the Law and find the details of the calendar God had given His chosen nation, you find the beginning of the year is based on a feast called Bikkurim and Bikkurim means,

Firstfruits. This is not just a term but a literal truth. You can't have The Feast of Firstfruits without having available the first fruits of the year!

This means the original calendar of the Law is not set on a number of months, it's set on when you can have the Feast of Firstfruits. This in turn means which month starts the year is dictated by the harvest, and the earliest harvest that was looked for to set the month that would contain Firstfruits was the barley harvest. To say Naomi and Ruth had returned at the beginning of the barley harvest, is to say they returned right at the first of the year. Since Pesach (Passover) is actually the first feast of the seven feast cycle and which is directly followed by Matzot (Feast of Unleavened Bread), Ruth came to Israel just in time to see the feast cycle from the start her very first year living in Israel. Of course, the fact they were here for the harvest season also has particular importance to the events which take place to shape Ruth's life. However, the fact it happened just this way seems prophetic, and if God is going to be "blamed" for anything specific I would say this timing is what God wanted for Ruth. In being there to take part in Passover Ruth had the ability to become a full part of the nation before the next events took place which in the eyes of the Law she needed to be. (Num. 9:14)

The next event is the fact Naomi had a relative on her husband's side of the family who was a man of great wealth. We are not told how he became a man of wealth but from the way he seems to care about the right procedures according to the Law, it's not hard to believe he served God. In spite

of how out of touch the rest of the nation was with God, this man had been blessed the way the Law speaks of the nation being blessed because he continued to follow God's ways. His name was Boaz and he was, at the very least, one of the people showing the famine was passing because he had fields with grain to be harvested. Now, according to the Law farmers were not to glean their fields or cut those harder to get to places like the corners. (Lev. 23:22) Corners, even before machines with turning radius restrictions, were extra work getting the grain and nothing like weeds that might be encroaching from two sides of a corner. Plus, the edges of fields may have gotten plowed well but corners are always hard to get when plowing or tilling ground using even horse or ox drawn equipment. Many other factors can make the corners less valuable and hard to harvest, but suffice it to say, it was wanting to get every last bit of usable harvest to put in the extra effort to get them. Thus, the Law told Israel to simply leave them and not worry about getting every last bit of crop. Was this wasteful? No, God intended Israel to be prosperous and if they had followed the Law as God asked, famine would be unheard of in Israel. Crops would be plentiful and worrying about any part of a crop that might be harder to get or subpar in quality didn't make sense.

The second reason this was not wasteful and really the main point of why God put the stipulation in the Law was because these leftovers were to be available to the poor and needy. I find this a beautiful idea which God showed the world as a

whole for how to help the poor. It was not a give away program that more often than not causes people to become lazy and simply expect to be given something for nothing. It also didn't leave one froze out of the system when you couldn't afford land or didn't know a trade of some kind. If you were willing to put forth some effort the Law gave ways, such as this one we are discussing, for people to go out and get food. They could glean what was left in the field during harvest and they could get what the farmers left in the corners and edges, but only if they were willing to put forth the effort to gather the raw materials from the fields and do the work to process the grain would they have food. What we see next is Ruth knowing about this ability in Israel and desiring to go out to the fields and attempt to glean after the reapers had done their work. It was Ruth's hope she would come upon a field where the owner was willing to allow her to do this and it would provide the food her and Naomi needed. The beauty in this story is Ruth's industrious desire to do this. In taking the initiative to ask this she shows herself to be a virtuous woman! (Prov. 31:10-31) To be clear, gleaning a field after the reapers did their work was all Ruth was hoping for. She wasn't looking for special treatment, just the right to do what the Law said the people of the nation were suppose to allow. With the nation not serving God as they should it's hard to say how difficult it'd be to accomplish Ruth's idea, but Ruth was willing! Thus, Naomi agrees this is a good idea and tells her to go.

So Ruth goes out and finds some

workers harvesting a field and begins to glean behind them. Ruth did not know this at the time but The Lord had led her right to one of the fields that belonged to her late husband and father-in-law's family; specifically Boaz's field! In those days often houses were built together in more of a town or city setting instead of being so spread out like we do in many agricultural areas. This made sense to do for the sake of defending the people of an area against attack. However, it often made it easy for enemies to raid fields which were outside the cities. This was a favorite activity of neighboring people to Israel and had been specifically a problem when dealing with the Moabites who often invaded the country sides of Israel for the sole purpose of stealing crops. No matter how any worker or land owner felt about what the Law said, it would not be surprising for them to be very wary of anyone who came into their field as they took up and bundled the crops into bundles or sheaves. Depending on the crop, the work of cutting or pulling the crops was something women were often employed to do while the men would be responsible for gathering what the woman cut/pulled and putting them into the bundles/sheaves.

Boaz would come out from Bethlehem to see how the work was progressing on his land and showing he was a man who believed in God, we are shown a greeting I love! Boaz says to his workers, "The Lord be with you," and they answer back, "The Lord bless you." In so many ways this is what is meant by Jews using the greeting of "Shalom" for both hello and goodbye. However, in English boiling down a meaning into one word often causes

the meaning of the word to fade, even to the point of being lost altogether. This is just the mental condition of speaking and only comprehending a weaker language which most of humanity has been brought to. This is why I'm so thankful to God that this greeting gets preserved in at least the King James Version as the full statements of the meaning. The Book of Ruth is just full of such poetry that while we understand why it's considered a book of history it is as powerful a book of poetry as any of the books considered in that category of Bible books. Of course, the Jewish organization of the books puts Ruth in the Kethuvim (The Writings) and that leaves it open to be seen as more than just history. However, the truth is, books of the Bible really defy specific classification so we should always keep an open mind, only using the organization of the books as a helpful high points kind of thought.

So Boaz greets his men in the Name of The Lord and directly following that he asks the foreman of his workers who this woman was in the field whom he knew was not one of his servants. Surely from what the foreman answers Boaz, he or other of the men had asked Ruth who she was, but it's also possible he simply recognized her for the same reason we are told just earlier that Naomi's family and friends had taken specific note of Naomi's return. In any case, he tells Boaz that she is the Moabite woman that came back with Naomi out of Moab. He says she had asked to glean after them and that's what she had been doing since the early morning when they started, right up to that time. Ruth had done her job so well she had obviously kept up with the work and not fallen behind because she had only

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we started talking again about how due to a famine in the land Isaac went to Gerar which was a city the Philistines controlled at the time. It was also where the Philistine king resided. However, we talked about the fact that this story, as well as Abraham's story which mirrors this one closely, was not about going to the Philistines as much as it was simply a truth that to go to Gerar put you among the Philistines. The real intent was the destination of Gerar which was an important trading post of the area. With famine being so great in Canaan food had to be sought from outside the region. Gerar was the best place to buy food from passing merchants on their way to and from Egypt and the larger world. From there the last segment got into a great discussion about the dynamics of faith and works as well as the Will of God and why it's important we seek it in light of the Bible often showing us what happens to people who choose to fight against God or refuse to trust what God tells us is right. All that kept us in Genesis chapter 26 verse one, and we will move on to verse 2 this time.

Verse 2 is where it becomes more important we understand Gerar was a place that people came through on their way to and from other parts of the world. This is because verse 2 tells us God spoke to Isaac and told him not to go down to Egypt but to stay in the land God had said to stay. Especially with famine being in the land of Canaan it might have seemed like a good idea to just go down to Egypt instead of

staying here. While Isaac might very well have known going to Egypt to stay would be a violation of what God had commanded his father Abraham, life has a way of getting you to do things you never would have intended to begin with. It would have been quite easy at the time for Isaac to go down to Egypt and find it a comfortable place to settle down. Without ever really desiring to stay long term Isaac could have ended up in Egypt for a very long time due to this. This could have been a very bad thing considering the timing for the chosen nation to be in Egypt would not come until much later. The fact God allowed and used that circumstance when He did later was because Joseph had been brought by God to a very powerful place in Egypt's leadership. This made Egypt a good place for the chosen nation to grow and learn. Later a Pharaoh would come to power that was very different, and it's believed this had to do with a conquest and thus, change in who ruled Egypt altogether.

In any case, there came that time the memory of Joseph and all he had done for Egypt faded and the idea there were these Hebrews living in Goshen was seen by the pharaoh as an opportunity to get some inexpensive labor. We see all that happen at a much later time and it's easy to assume that the ruling party in Egypt at this time during Isaac's life was the same leadership who were in charge when Joseph ends up there later. This leadership was more pliable to seeing wisdom and being willing to use that for Egypt's good whereas the later rulers



were more interested in oppressive power. If Isaac had gone down there with his great wealth he would have been recognized as a man who knew what he was doing. This might have peaked the interest in the minds of Egypt's leadership that Isaac might be someone they'd be interested in getting acquainted with. From there anything could have happened from Isaac staying in Egypt and almost melding into the culture there to Pharaoh making some pact with Isaac that when he returned to Canaan he would do so almost as Pharaoh's emissary. This could have shifted the region's powers significantly!

I know all that might sound like going pretty far and wide when talking about Isaac who understood what God had promised his father. However, when one is on the ground living through the events it can be hard to see the forest for the trees! Ending up in some tight league with the Egyptian leadership of that day might have seemed like the blessing Isaac was (as his father had been) waiting to see. Gaining the power to go back to Canaan with the force of Egypt behind him might have sounded like the answer to the question of how God intended all that land to belong to the family as God had promised. What we see beginning here in verse 2 is God making it clear to Isaac that was not what He wanted or the way He would handle giving the land to Isaac and his family. This is why we see in verse 3 God telling Isaac to stay in this land he was in and there God would be with him. Isaac was like his father in that they both were sojourners in Canaan. God had promised them the land but for now, they were to continue being nomadic in the way they lived here. It was in this land that God would bless Isaac and one day his family would possess the land that at

the time belonged to many different Canaanite people.

This was what God had promised to Abraham and this is what He was promising Isaac, but obedience was key! It's interesting as you read through what God tells Isaac here, God confirms He would multiply Isaac's seed as the stars of the heavens and then repeats the fact they would own all the land of what was for now different countries. The emphasis here probably loses something in the translation once again, but the repetitiveness of saying this actually maintains it. This is a big reason why it's so bad when people attempt to "translate" the Bible and leave out what they see as repetitiveness. These verses give us a good example because the first time it is said they would own all the countries, it's coupled with the fact God would do for Isaac what He had told Abraham He would do. The emphasis is the fact the promises of God had truly passed to Isaac. We read these stories and just take it as fact, but again, living through this it must have seemed like God had been promising this for so long and yet it still didn't happen. As much as Abraham had to live his entire life without seeing evidence God's promises about possessing the land coming true, Isaac had now lived for quite a long while since his father's death and nothing it would seem had changed on that front!

The second time the possess all these countries thing is said, it is coupled with the fact God would multiply his seed like the stars of heaven. This was the second large promise of God to Abraham which seemed to have little to no evidence backing it up. Abraham in the end had a total of eight sons but God made it clear Isaac, not Ishmael

would be the son of promise. God confirmed to Abraham that sending Ishmael and his mother away when he did was the right thing to do. By the time Abraham had the six sons he had with Keturah he knew it was only Isaac that was the son of promise and without anyone asking or God specifically telling him to, Abraham gives them gifts and sends them away from Isaac. Thus, Abraham died with this multitude promise having resulted in his lifetime as just one son! Isaac had two, but that's still not many and he and Rebekah never had any more. How hard was it going to be on Isaac if he could already see that Esau was not going to be part of the promise of God because Esau didn't care about it? One might ask, if Isaac saw this in anyway, why would he want to give Esau the birthright? The answer is first that Esau was the first born. According to tradition that's how it worked. Second, God had never told him to give it to Jacob instead. Third, Isaac was probably holding out hope beyond hope that Esau would learn to care about the promises of God. Many people who profess to be Christians hold out hope beyond hope that their children who reject God will turn their lives around one day. Isaac is no different than any parent today might be in that way.

The bottom line is that Isaac had little reason to believe the promise of God that his seed would be like the stars of the heaven was in anyway coming true. In some ways Isaac is far worse than his father when it comes to that. Abraham knew God would build a chosen nation from his seed but Abraham had also been promised to be the father of many nations. All his eight sons together actually spoke to that being very

plausible. Isaac, on the other hand, only had two sons. He would die having only had two sons. His only reason for believing God was because his faith was the substance of what he hoped for and the evidence of what he had not yet seen! (Heb. 11:1) In telling Isaac in these verses that the multitude promise was still in full force God basically says, it would have to be because otherwise there would be no way for them to possess all these countries. This is why it was important to do as God had told Abraham, which was to walk the length and the breadth of this land. Understand by that physical truth how serious the promise of God was. Isaac needed to stay in this land and know only God could bring about all God had promised to his father which clearly passed to Isaac!

God also says that these truths would culminate in the truth that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Isaac's seed. Was this statement a repeat of what God had told Abraham? Yes and no. Yes, in the fact God had told Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed and we can see that being true by the facts we now know. God gave to Israel His oracles. The New Testament would be nothing without the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and most of the Hebrew Bible would not hold much meaning if we did not have the Torah. Also, without the Law God specifically instructed Israel to enact, countless millions of people would have lived and gone out into eternity without God in their lives if they had not had the example and words Israel held which pointed the way to salvation as being through faith in God alone! In a time when people were very familiar with sacrificing to false gods the Law God gave to Israel had to



be the most interesting thing anyone with eyes to see and ears to hear, ever encountered. So yes, all the nations of the world have been blessed by God giving Israel the Law and through it we can see how Jesus was The Messiah Who offered the world something unbelievable. However, we also see the world didn't just refuse to take advantage of that, they killed Jesus!

As bad as it is for that to happen, God had a plan in either case. Killing Jesus made Him The Passover Lamb the feast had been prophesying about for centuries. The Lamb Abraham told Isaac about when he said, God would provide Himself a Lamb. (Gen. 22:8) With the chosen nation failing to maintain the representation of the Law, God Himself gave us an example of what the Law was trying to show us by being willing to sacrifice Himself, even though He could have been so much more! Now there's a statement you won't hear too many Christian teachers make, and that's because Christians just don't get the fullness of all God has offered us through both the giving of the Law as well as The Messiah. The world has been blessed beyond measure that God loved us so much! So with that being true, why is the question of what God was saying to Isaac here about blessing the nations of the world through his seed being a repeat and not a repeat? It's because here we need to look at what the words are coupled with as well. This entire statement of God stands as such a good example of what I always say about not fractionalizing Scripture. To understand what God is saying in any particular verse, we need to be familiar with what's around that verse. Great value has come from people memorizing specific verses of Scripture, but at the same time it's so true we often get to quoting such verses

and end up doing it out of context.

This is a problem that has plagued the church for a very long time. Something a little out of context can many times be worse than something a lot out of context. When the words are taken totally out of context it might be obvious what they're being used for isn't what was being said in the verse but a little can be hard to detect. It also can often be something people don't feel needs corrected. We like to feel the spirit of what's being said over all is good, why sweat the details. The reason to sweat the details is that it's the little foxes that spoil the vine! (Song. 2:15) One day we're fine with quoting something out of context and getting away with it giving the not quite so right impression, but as time goes on that little wrong impression becomes the impression of the verse. It becomes the whole reason the verse exists and maybe one day that wrong impression even gets solidified into doctrine! From there it's what gets taught because it's all most people claiming to be Christians know. Even when we do go back and read the verses around the often quoted verse we try to bend and/or ignore the true context to fit what we believe instead of opening our eyes to the truth. I'm sorry to say but what calls itself Christianity today practically lives off such mistakes and are so solidified in them it would be considered heresy to change. Don't believe such a thing is possible? Just go back and look at the fact the chosen nation killed the very Messiah they were suppose to be watching for!

See Abraham through Isaac's seed has blessed us all in ways we don't even think about but the real reason I say this was also not a repeat is going back to the same dynamic I was talking about with repeating

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LXIII

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."

In our last segment we continued our rundown of the Roman emperors as we led our way up to seeing how Rome eventually came to be considered a Christian empire. In that part we discussed how the empire was in constant conflict with the barbarians. By this point in Rome's history it had become an almost endless task just to keep the barbarians from crossing the border and driving them back after they did. In our last segment we even covered how close one very defiant barbarian tribe had actually gotten to the capital city of Rome itself and how the emperor at the time narrowly defeated them before they got there. This spurred the emperor to build a series of walls around the city of Rome, and that in and of itself shows how much Rome was no longer the powerhouse it once was where the people at least living in the interior of the empire could feel totally safe. Our last segment ended by talking about how Emperor Aurelian gave up territory on the north of the Rhine River in an attempt to relieve some of the pressure Rome was facing, but he also moved to bring down the Palmyrene Empire in order to bring its territory back under Roman control. This brought us to the year 273 A.D., and we will continue from there as we begin this segment.

One of the most important facts of the last segment was the fact Rome had failed to

bring the Gallic Empire back under its control, and with Aurelian on a high over his success against the Palmyrene Empire it was time to take another look at that. That's exactly what Aurelian began making preparations for in 273 A.D., and he would move on the Gallic Empire in early 274 A.D. Emperor Claudius before him had done some real damage to the Gallic Empire during his attempt to take back control of its territory, and this meant Aurelian had a great start. The Gallic Empire was shrinking and its only reason for existing was the fact its leader(s) were able to do a better job of beating back the barbarian threat. At the time of its formation Rome was doing a terrible job but no matter how well earned it was or was not, Aurelian had seen great success in that area. The point of the Gallic Empire being separate from Rome seemed more like an excuse than a reason at this point. Maybe that was a thought in the head of the Gallic Empire, a man named Tetricus I, because some historians record that Tetricus I secretly was willing to give up his throne to Rome in exchange for less brutal defeat which Tetricus I believed was coming. Many modern historians believe this is nothing but Roman propaganda formulated to help keep the Gallic army from rising up against Rome after its defeat, but we don't really know.

The facts are that Aurelian did march on the Gallic Empire early in 274 A.D. and faced the Gallic army in northeast France. Aurelian is credited with performing well as a commander in that battle, and not long into



it Tetricus I was “captured.” This is the part that makes the story of some kind of secret deal somewhat believable. Tetricus I was captured it would seem with ease and this differed from the many times a main leader died in battle or committed suicide before they could be captured. Maybe Tetricus I felt the wise thing to do as Aurelian closed in on his position was to surrender, but even if that was the case it's maybe a little odd Aurelian didn't have him executed as a show of strength to both his army as well as the Gallic army. This could have happened during or sometime after the battle was totally won, but instead Tetricus I was allowed to live and watch his army soundly defeated by Aurelian. The Gallic army was greatly demoralized over the capture of their leader, and while they did not totally give up it was clear this was the end of the Gallic Empire and no sort of counter to Rome's victory was ever raised by those of the Gallic army or the people of the Gallic territory.

In any case, Aurelian would march his victorious army back to Rome where Aurelian would be granted honors once again from the senate. After bringing the Palmyrene Empire back into Rome Aurelian was honored with the title “Restorer of the East,” but after bringing the Gallic Empire back into Rome the senate gave him the title of Restitutor Orbis, which means “Restorer of the World!” As it relates to our study I'll point out how much this title shows the way Rome still saw itself. It was clear with the barbarian threat always lurking in the North, along with many other factors, that Rome did not control the world. Yes, Roman territory had been restored to its former size for the most part but it was clear this was not the world. That said, Rome was the world power of the day and, once again, for this moment

in time it would appear they were the undisputed world power. It was in that light this title was given. For the Romans, the world was once again as it should be, and this was something to celebrate.

This brings us to one last note about whether there was a secret deal between the two emperors or if that was just Roman propaganda. After the dust of all this settled, not only was Tetricus I allowed to live but he was made a senator and also a governor in Italy. If Tetricus I was simply a defeated leader who had been captured one would have expected prison or, at the very least, some menial position that basically mocked the fact he was once so great. In the end it doesn't matter a whole lot. However, I've spoke more than once about how the world seemed to understand Rome was its last hope at one great centralizing power. It wasn't just Rome who believed all was right with the world for Rome to be reunified, but many in the world felt it was a stabilizing force which a larger portion of the world benefited from. That's what the world looks to great powers for. The Tower of Babel effect may not make just every nation excited over the thought of being one big unified world but if there is a major power that can be called upon to assist with just about every conflict or potential war, the world feels more at ease. As we have covered before all the empires in this string of empires leading up to Rome had served that purpose to at least some degree. Early on it might not have been seen so much as help as some large empire sticking its nose in where many felt it didn't belong. However, as time went on, this kind of arrangement felt more and more like how the world should be.

Tetricus I likely felt with Aurelian showing he was able to bring the East back

into the Roman Empire it only made sense to turn over the West as well making Rome once again that stabilizing power the world “needed.” No matter what the thought Aurelian had succeeded where so many other emperors had failed, and no doubt he was feeling on top of the world. While the idea and prominence of it had faded by the time of the Roman Empire make no mistake, Rome still believed as so many nations and empires had felt when it came to their emperors. Of course, I’m referring to the fact Rome saw its emperors as gods, and when you had accomplished what Aurelian had accomplished it was easy for people to feel this was true. Also, just like the Egyptians and others so much of the world is familiar with, the sun or the deity that ruled the sun was very often looked at as the top god in the Roman pantheon. This was another act of Aurelian in 274 A.D. He would use the excitement over his victories to strengthen the concept in the empire that Sol Invictus (the sun) was the top god to be worshiped. The beginning theory of this was that the people of the empire would be free to worship whatever god they believed in but ultimately the sun was the supreme god. Aurelian would build a lavish temple to the sun in Rome using the wealth he had gained in defeating the East.

This relates once again directly to our study of God's Chosen People as one of the people who would have the greatest resistance to this idea would be the Jews. The first law in what we know as The Ten Commandments leaves no room for worship of The One True God as subordinate to some other god. (Ex. 20:3) No one who serves The One True God can accept that He is

subordinate. We may struggle with letting go of things in our lives that hold power or influence over us which are godlike, but getting things right all begins by putting God first! This is not just putting God where He and He alone belongs, it's the path to understanding He is The Only True God that exists. It's the way that leads us to lay aside the other “gods” in our lives, whatever those things may be, and fully trust that our faith in God is all we need. This thinking is what so few people professing Christianity never realize and/or are never taught. We talk about our understanding that this life must end but we seem to miss the fact the sacrifices in the Law of Moses were not just representing the death of The Messiah, many of them are there to represent our willingness to lay down our lives. This is not just the giving of our time as we live our lives but the literal shedding of our blood which represents the end of our earthly lives! This is what Paul is talking about and referring to when he says in Hebrews 9:22 “... and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

Jesus' blood proves to us God has a plan to take care of the fact we will all die. God Himself was killed by the hands of sinful man and He simply got up and walked away from that death. If God can do that, how little a thing is it for Him to grant each of us life after death? This is what we are talking about as Christians when we speak of the blood of Jesus covering all sin. There is no sin so great God cannot forgive. Jesus told us there is only one sin God will not forgive, but even that has obvious dynamics as to why it's true. (Matt. 12:31) Since God has proven He has this ability, we can afford to live for Him without concern for the fact



our day of remission lies ahead of us. We will one day die but if we die walking in and striving for faith, that's just a fact we need not fear. The sacrificing of animals when one had done wrong was an admission of this fact. We may not totally understand how this works and why it works, but God in His righteousness took us away from the Tree of Life when we gained the knowledge He didn't want us to be responsible for. (Gen. 3:22-24) He didn't do that without a plan to save those who still desire Him, and so when we come to God we must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

God didn't end the need for the sacrifices He gave to Israel by sending Jesus to shed His blood. Jesus was sent to shed His blood when He was because the Jewish system of following the Law was failing to be maintained to such a great degree those sacrifices would soon end. The sacrifices were no more necessary before Jesus than they are after Jesus. We just need an example of the truth, and if studying the Law without being able to perform it (because the temple is gone or because we are not part of the chosen nation) or see it performed was going to be the long-term thing we now know it is, God would come down in human flesh and show us the truth in one very large example. The memory of this would stick with the world for a very long time as we see proof of today! This is why it's worth living for God in the here and now. If we live for God in the here and now, we will get to go on to live for God into eternity. If you believe some other god or ceremony of some kind can continue your life after death you are putting your trust in the thoughts of men which makes no sense. However, if you put your trust in God you can receive what He has shown us only

He can offer. If that's what you want, it goes without question, God needs to be first in our lives!

It makes perfect sense to someone who does not serve The One True God to say, you can serve whatever gods you want but this particular one will be the main god according to the edict of the powers that be. From their perspective this is the way to keep the peace. No one should be upset because they are free to serve their god(s) as long as they recognize the top god they are told to give credence to. If we contrast this to what the Greeks attempted to do in outlawing the Torah and its practice it might look like the Roman emperor isn't asking for much, but it's still not acceptable. Jews and Christians both should see, even if all they do is look at the subject through religious eyes, that it's not acceptable. However, these times are often when we see separation between those who really desire God and those who are just playing some religious game. Those who are just following a religion can easily bend the rules of the religion to allow this. This makes you just like all other religious people the world over. I mean, what good is a religion if instead of serving you it asks you to give your life? Only when you trust in The One True God and actually believe He is able is it worth such a thing!

When it comes to the Jewish side of things we don't have much to go on for specifically how hard this edict of Aurelian's was on them. This has a lot to do with the fact the Jews had become more and more scattered into smaller disconnected communities. This meant they each had to choose how to deal with this on their own, but incidents like this is what made them go further and further far and wide in the world.

This is the hiding deep in the wilderness we see illustrated in Revelation. (Rev. 12:13-14) It would take a more concentrated and specifically targeted effort to totally destroy the chosen nation, and that effort would not come about until much later in time from where we are. However, seeing things like this is why we are studying the Jewish history by trying to understand the world's continually evolving attempt to overcome the Tower of Babel effect. When it comes to Christians, there is not the issue of scattered or not scattered. Believers outside the chosen nation had no God-given centralizing structure to begin with. The fact people end up relying on such religious structures for their salvation is why God limited the enactment of the representative things of the Law to one people. They would be a focus which God would use, and in so doing they would have a much better chance of being His ministers while still serving Him. That is to say, being used as a nation of people dedicated to the ministry of the Law while still living for God as individuals.

In spite of all that, those who called themselves Christians began to believe more and more in the centralizing idea as a good way to promote their beliefs; both in an outward to the world evangelistic way as well as for the individuals already part of the church. This was not the right thing to do but that's an entire teaching some of which we have covered at other times. The bottom line of the issue is that there are true believers both inside and outside the "Christian" structure and Jews, for what by now should be obvious reasons, scattered all over the world. No matter where believers are there will be persecution, it's only a matter of whether that persecution is severe or minor. Certainly the Jews often faced severe enough

persecution to continue to uproot and move many times. Some Christians have done this too, but since the centralization of what calls itself Christianity came about, this has been far less about secular governments in many places than it has been due to persecution directly from what calls itself Christian. What we see in a situation such as Aurelian instituting the sun god as the top god is a time when it was clear true believers were running from that main centralizing power which the Romans still were at this point in history. The world will always attempt to put true believers outside such structures and/or dispose of them completely because we represent people who will not simply meld into the world's system. No matter how disheartening it might be to feel you are alone as a believer in Christ, always remember that our ability to not have to be a cohesive group is a protection God has granted. God is bringing His chosen nation back to the promised land in great numbers and we can once again clearly see how hard a thing it is to exist in that way among the world. However, what we know as we see that happen is that the return of our Saviour draws ever so close!

Getting back more directly to Aurelian, we see as we look at his regain a man who understood the power of centralization as he implemented several reforms in the empire. He reformed the Roman coin by setting a new standard for the amount of silver in new coins which came with a special mark to denote they were the new coins. While he struggled to get these new coins out he began to recall the old coins in an attempt to make the monetary system in the empire more stable overall. Aurelian also worked to reform the food distribution system, specifically the system that

distributed free food to the poor. He did many things like adding food to give out instead of just bread or grain itself and he increased the size of bread loaves without increasing the price. This made Aurelian very popular with the common citizens of Rome, but we also see how such a thing made him increasingly unpopular with the higher classes of people. In the course of all the reforms Aurelian introduced, or at least attempted to accomplish, he had to beat back the widespread corruption among the rulers around the empire. This often involved dismissing people from their posts and replacing them with more trustworthy people or removing/changing positions to make systems more efficient.

As long running as some of these corrupt systems had been at this point, this was truly going to war with bureaucracy that had existed before Aurelian came to power and expected to exist after he was gone. People who have become comfortable in their careers as government agents and work almost without oversight other than by those who also sit in much their same position take it very personal when the people who are suppose to be in charge reach down and mess with the good thing they have going. Aurelian made many enemies as he attempted to reform the Roman governmental system and not only did he face rebellions from others who wished to take his power, he came under threat from those who work more in the shadows. Now it had been a long held dream of Rome to go east of the empire and bring the Persians or whatever else was the ruling power at the time into the Roman Empire. Wars had been fought which for short-lived times took at

least some of the East into Rome but Rome spent most of its time just attempting to hold back those in the East from taking from the Roman Empire. Aurelian had great success bringing down the Palmyrene Empire and the Gallic Empire. The North at the time seemed to be more secure than it had and maybe this had a lot do to with the full empire pulling together to keep the barbarians at bay which was something they had not done since the split offs took place.

Aurelian had also pretty much solidified the Roman border in the North when he gave up Dacia prior to going after the two pull away empires on the east and west. Rome seemed as if it was in as good a shape as it had been in some time, and as Aurelian settled all this the powers in Persia were being unsettled by the sudden and successive deaths of what had been strong rulers. These kings were replaced with far weaker rulership and Aurelian saw an opportunity to take their part of the world or at least add to Rome a significant part of their territory. Stories like this are why we speak of the barbarians being the who of who took down the Roman Empire in the end. Not only are they the people who eventually moved in to take Rome's territories in what we call Europe today but we see Rome was either fighting with them or being happy they could hold them back. In contrast, Aurelian still had his eye out for opportunity to move into Persia which had never worked long term in the past.

Aurelian would gather his forces and head for Persia, but he wouldn't make it very far due to internal problems he may or may not have been aware existed. The story goes

that a secretary of Aurelian's had lied about a minor issue. However, this man being aware of how strict an administrator Aurelian was feared he might face severe punishment as he had seen others face. Thus, this man forged a document which showed a list of high officials Aurelian had supposedly marked for execution. The secretary shared this document with all the right people to get the attention of the high ranking men in the Praetorian Guard. Angered and fearing for their own lives this force specifically slatted to protect the emperor would murder Aurelian as he waited in Thrace to cross over into Asia Minor on his way to Persia. For a short time his enemies in the senate were able to pass the "condemnation of memory" for Aurelian, but before the end of the year it was reversed and Aurelian was deified. Also for a short time there is speculation Aurelian's wife ruled the empire after his death. Some coins of hers have been found that were minted after her husband's death. In the end the senate for the first time in quite awhile is said to have elected the next emperor as was suppose to happen according to Roman law. That said, some say the next emperor was still chosen or appointed emperor by the Roman army.

The man the senate elected was named, Marcus Claudius Tacitus. It is said the army was so distraught over their part in Aurelian's death they relinquished control to the senate to choose this man. It is said the army then ratified the senate's choice and Tacitus accepted on September 25th of 275 A.D. While we passed the end of the men specifically listed as "Barracks Emperors" with the death of Gallienus the army, by and large, still controlled who was emperor. In fact, if the story of how Tacitus came to the throne is true, Tacitus was the last emperor

to be elected by the senate. One fact that seems to point to the story being at least somewhat true is that Tacitus certainly was not the victorious military commander the army appointed emperor because he could lead the troops and handle some current crisis. In what could be taken as a sign the military was content with the empire as is and maybe were not fond of marching to Persia in the first place, they allowed Tacitus to be made emperor in spite of the fact he was a senator well past his prime. In fact, Tacitus was reluctant to even return to Rome and rejoin the senate for his appointment but he is credited with reversing the decision that Aurelian not be deified.

About the biggest thing Tacitus did was restore much of the power the senate was to have according to already existing law. Since so many edicts of emperors had changed the system over time Tacitus' actions were considered reforms but they would not last long as many things which hold no practical power of themselves do. Probably the most interesting fact that comes out of the history of Tacitus is that Aurelian had hired barbarian troops to supplement the Roman army he was taking to the East. After Aurelian's murder these barbarian troops turned and began plundering eastern Roman provinces. They likely felt they had the right to do such a thing as a way to extract payment for their services which were likely something promised to come from the spoils of war. No war with the East took place but they still needed to go home with something. Doing something to drive these barbarians out of Roman territory became high on the list of tasks Tacitus needed to take care of. He along with his half-brother Marcus Annianus Florianus who Tacitus had made Praetorian Prefect, accomplished this task

together. After this Tacitus needed to head west to Gaul where two barbarian tribes had once again invaded, but on the way Tacitus died of the fever in Tyana. Some accounts say he was assassinated, but in either case this happened in June or early July of 276 A.D. meaning Tacitus regain as emperor lasted less than a year.

Florianus would proclaim himself emperor in his half-brother's place and the senate would put their stamp of approval on it. Much of the empire would also go along with this without complaint because with the ever present barbarian threat on the loose in the empire, who had time to argue? Apparently those in the South felt they did because the provinces of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Phoenicia all backed a man named, Marcus Aurelius Probus. Probus was a Roman general who, it is said, led successful campaigns on every front of the Roman frontier. Probus would take advantage of the fact Egypt was on his side and cut off grain shipments to most of the empire. Probus would march his troops to the southeast shores of Asia Minor where he knew he'd have the advantage against Florianus. Florianus would go to defend his throne on Probus' terms because with grain running low he had no choice. Probus would take advantage of the hot climate of the area which his troops were use to and Florianus' were not. Probus would use what today we call guerrilla war tactics to wear down Florianus' army instead of going for a normal head-on assault. Due to the heat many of Florianus' men fell ill and Probus would launch raids around the city they were stationed in. Florianus' men became very frustrated and disheartened to the point they

rose up and killed Florianus themselves. Thus, Florianus' rule as emperor lasted less than three months.

Probus would be more respectful of the senate's power than Florianus had been. He would send a formal letter to the senate asking for their approval of him as emperor. The senate gladly agreed to this and Probus took power in late 276 A.D. He would take control of Florianus' army and march off to fight the Goths along the Danube River in 277 A.D. The Goths so respected Probus' abilities they requested a treaty with Rome. By 278 A.D. Probus faced two of the invading barbarian tribes in Gaul as he sent his generals to face off against another so that they could clear Gaul of barbarians. Probus' success in all this gave his army the courage to follow him as he crossed the Rhine to bring the fight to the barbarians' homeland. He would see success and extract manpower from the barbarians to rebuild the long abandon fortifications of Hadrin between the Rhine and Danube Rivers. As much as all this was a victory, disease, military service, and general chaos in the empire had decreased Roman populations alarmingly. Probus would look to solve this problem by settling "defeated" barbarians in Roman territory in significant numbers. While some facts make it seem Rome was on a comeback, one has to see how Rome was actually only exchanging short-term gain for long-term lose!

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.***

the fact they would possess the countries. I've said it before and I'll say it again here because it's important to keep in mind. There are people who believe The God of the Old Testament is a different God than The God of the New Testament. When I say that I assume most people take it as meaning people literally feel there were two different deities we are dealing with and that is the meaning by and large. However, far more people believe The God of the Old Testament is a different God than The God of the New Testament not because they believe there are two different deities involved but because they believe God changed. Dispensational doctrine aside, this is one of those mistakes that is cemented into the Christian doctrine and mindset of what calls itself Christianity! It's the belief that through Jesus God changed things. It's where we get all the "Christian" beliefs about how God did away with the sacrifices of the Law by sacrificing Himself. From there the door is open to void almost all the Law with the exceptions of those items people say Jesus, how do they put it? Oh yeah, re-affirmed!

If you haven't heard that argument before you probably haven't been exposed to a lot of "Christian" teachers. Jesus said with His own mouth He wasn't here to destroy the Law but to fulfill it and people grab hold of the fulfill it part and use it to turn what Jesus said to the exact opposite of what He said. Instead of taking it as Jesus was giving us the same example the Law gave which is something to hold onto, believing God has it all worked out in His plan, it gets taken as, Jesus disposed of the Law by bringing it to fulfillment so we no longer need it. This is the same argument used against Jesus' direct

words that not one small piece of the Law shall pass until all is fulfilled. They say, Jesus fulfilled the Law so it's behind us and Jesus is in front of us. People just want what they want to be true. Very rarely do people seek the real truth! This is why it's going to be so shocking to so many people claiming to be Christians on that day Jesus splits the eastern sky and returns to this earth. Not only are they going to be shocked they didn't get caught up to be with Him, they're going to be more so shocked when they see Him bringing about the rebuilding of the temple which the Jews still have not accomplished and more than likely will not before His return.

They're going to be shocked out of their minds when the altar of burnt offering is re-established and the animal sacrifices begin again. The list of things they'll be shocked about goes on and on but a great deal of the list is based on just what we covered. They will be shocked to see The God Who gave Israel the Law in the first place is still The God Who wants it enacted on this earth! Why? Because they believe The God of the Old Testament is a different God than The God of the New Testament! It's just that simple. They will stand in astonishment that after everything that calls itself the church has taught over the centuries the Law God gave the chosen nation still has value. Because they don't understand how to see the truth of what's being said in God's Word and instead like to use it as a tool to comfort themselves. This has already been prepared for and we've talked about it before. There is already the false doctrine of an anti-christ being the one who shows up some time before or after the Second Coming of Christ which means Jesus' actual coming would be the third,

right? Yeah, that makes sense because it gives room for this anti-christ nonsense. People don't want to believe there is something with us now that claims to be Christ which large numbers of people who claim to be believers in The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob follow. Thus, we have to mess with the true doctrine about the Second Coming of Christ to make room for the tribulation thing they teach will also come after all the good Christians are raptured away.

It's enough to give one a headache just trying to go over it all, but the simple truth is that these things are what Paul was warning Timothy to understand were just over the horizon of time from where he would be ministering. It's why Paul tells Timothy to make full proof of the ministry God had called him to do. In Timothy's day the fields were still white and ripe for harvest but the day was quickly approaching when people with itchy ears would want teachers to tell them lies. (II Tim. 4:3-4) The spirit of anti-christ was already at work to bring it about! (I Jn 4:3) So is it important to study the Word of God and when you think you've made it all the way through, go back and begin again? Resoundingly yes! In a day when the spirit of anti-christ is not only at work but alive and well surrounding us on all sides it's more important than ever! It's more important than ever we understand the Word of God for ourselves, and as much as what I have written here can and no doubt will be dismissed by many for no other reason than the sarcastic, even "demeaning" tone to it, it's my hope you get in and stay in the Word of God until you clearly see it yourself. There's already an army out there

throwing about the wrong anti-christ doctrine. God needs workers in the field of the truth. People who will say, here am I Lord, send me! (Isa. 6:8)

All that might sound like a lot to go off on just because we came to a good example of what I mean about knowing what's around a verse of Scripture, but every opportunity to emphasize the importance of such things, I feel led to take. I can guarantee as Isaac heard these words of God he absorbed the meaning in what we might call the repetitiveness. He saw and understood the connectivity of the statements and the importance behind them. This is how he kept fighting the good fight in Canaan in spite of the fact the land he was born in was still a strange land to him. It's how Isaac finished his course knowing no matter how little or how much he could see how God was going to bring about these promises, he knew they would come to pass! It's why he would have had no trouble understanding The God of the Old Testament is the same exact God with the same exact plan as The God we see in the New Testament. To Isaac it was clear that the only way God was going to give his seed the land of several countries was by destroying wicked people who stood in the way. He would not stand back and ask, how could a God of love do such a thing? He would believe that in spite of the death and destruction this might and did in fact entail (which wasn't even as much as it should have been if Israel had truly destroyed the Canaanite nations as God had asked) God's plan to bless those across this wide world who seek him would be blessed by it!

This was a perspective God wanted Isaac to have, but it's even more important for those of us who read about what was later done to accomplish the task. We only see this fleshly life so it sometimes is hard for us to see what God did in Canaan as an act of love. The simplest way to explain it is to point out, all those times we see people in the Bible asking, Lord how long will you wait to avenge our blood? How long will the evil seemingly overcome the good? God has been answering those questions all along! The fact He will continue to answer that question when Jesus comes back to this earth and the blood flows to the horses' bridal will be one of the biggest reasons many who claim to be Christians will say, this has to be the anti-christ! We just don't understand what it means when we say God is the Righteous Judge of us all, but that's our failing not His. A big part of walking with God is learning to understand what true righteousness is because it's very different than man's interpretation of what righteousness should be. God knows what He's doing. He knew what He was doing when He allowed the chosen nation to become slaves in Egypt and He knew when He brought them out with a mighty hand leaving a devastated Egypt in His wake. He knew when He was telling Israel not to spare a single life of different cities and people of Canaan and He knew what He was doing when He allowed Israel to come under bondage to great empires of men. He knows what He's doing as so many of us ask in these days, why oh God do you wait to send The Messiah back to this horribly corrupted earth, and He will know what He's doing as thousands lie dead when He finally does return to set His feet on the Mount of Olives!

We serve a God of mercy and grace

the likes of which no man can hold a candle to. However, even sinful men can be aware that letting evil triumph is often only the result of good men doing nothing. God allows men a tremendous amount of freedom to do evil in this world because this world was made as a decision making place for us. The good live among the evil every day, and we see it in our day so clearly. However, as God said at the time of Noah, His Spirit will not always strive with man. (Gen. 6:3) God will only allow so much, but that said, only He can see all the aspects for why He allows what He allows and why He does not allow what He does not allow. We must never lose sight of the simple fact He is Our Creator. His ways are so far above ours, our ability to see the why is often totally out of our current ability to understand. However, that does not mean we don't see and cannot grasp the why He acts in certain incidents and times. This is what we find in the Word of God. There are many stories in the Bible that as we grow in our faith we will begin to see more clearly and begin to understand the why. We must be careful to allow God to guide us and teach us and not think we need to come up with explanations of our own like, The God of the Old Testament is different than The God of the New. People of faith put their eyes on God, not on the thoughts of men!

Finishing out what God said to Isaac as He appeared to him in Gerar, God makes it clear all He was promising to do was due to the fact Abraham was a man of great faith. In explaining how and why Abraham was a great man of faith God lists several things a couple of which are another example of how people try to come up with human explanations instead of finding the answers through faith. The first thing God credits

Abraham with is, of course, the starting point of all faith. Abraham obeyed the voice of God! This is the very first thing we must learn and must be willing to do, and it's sad how few people professing Christianity really get that. This has a lot to do with why I talk so much about the Christian doctrine of salvation being, or at the very least giving the impression, some formula like a sinner's prayer grants you some magical ticket to heaven. People who think like this will listen to God's voice and come to Him but then they believe they don't need to continue listening and seeking His voice. No matter how much people believe they need to continue listening to God's voice they often don't learn much of anything because of the idea faith is just blind belief causing them to believe it's only about the trust it takes to come to God in the first place, instead of keeping that trust and learning and growing as they should listen to God's voice!

This is why God didn't just say Abraham obeyed His voice. Abraham also kept God's charge! This is where we see how faith is so very personal. I have talked in this study about times such as when God asked Abraham to take Isaac to sacrifice him and how that could have caused Abraham to believe God was not a God he wanted to serve. Instead, Abraham did what God asked him to do without hesitation. In spite of the knowledge Abraham had, that told him the God he served did not want us to believe we can sacrifice our children in place of ourselves to cover our sins or do it to appease God, Abraham obeyed. This Abraham did not just in that one incident but it's the reason why we have that extreme example to look at and consider! Long

before God asked Abraham to take Isaac and sacrifice him, Abraham was a man who accomplished what God told him to do no matter if he understood it or not. Even this is not blind belief but the truth that Abraham was crystal clear on when he was hearing the voice of God and he knew God had a reason not just the idea everything that happens in life must be because God wanted it that way!

The next items on the list are that Abraham kept God's commandments, statutes, and His laws. Now, I could write on and on about all three of these specific items and if I feel it's God's will to do so we can pick this up next time, but I'm running out of room for this segment. Thus, I just want to explain that there are people who firmly believe based on verses like this that God had already given at least some portion of His Law to man before God gave it to Israel in it's written down form. This in some ways brings us to another one of those yes and no answers. Yes, God had given man instructions for how to live but this took the willingness of individuals to receive those instructions. No, at this time God had not give His Law in a written form as He later did with Israel. It's important we understand these men of faith didn't gain what they gained because there was writings anyone, no matter how keen they were at hearing God's voice, could pick up and read. So with that we end emphasizing the thought once more of how valuable the Word of God is to all of us today and what a blessing God has given us through It!

Until next time, Shalom!

stood in the shade of the canopy, traditionally set up to shelter workers from the sun, for very short periods of time. It's also possible that being the humble woman she was, she did not take her small breaks at the same time the other workers did so as not to be in the way in any fashion. No matter the case on that point, the fact she had spent so little time even taking a rest from the heat of the day was something the foreman had taken note of.

It would seem Boaz was impressed by this and finding she was the woman who came back with Naomi he knew there was a family connection there. His heart was moved in the way God wanted members of the chosen nation to take care of their own. This caused him to say something we don't want to miss and which if this was not an overview I'd probably spend some real time on, but it goes by very fast in the words. Boaz goes to Ruth and tells her to listen to his words. What he was about to tell her Boaz wanted her to know came with sincerity. Boaz was not just a foreman who told her it was alright for her to glean as they worked, he was the land owner and had every right to tell her what he was going to say. However, before it passes by I want you to notice that in his call for her to listen he calls her "daughter." This has two distinct meanings important to the fact he said it to Ruth. First, calling her daughter was brushing off any stigma she might feel about being a Moabite woman who was a stranger in Israel. Boaz was addressing her as a member of the nation first and foremost. That's an important fact! Second, one should take note of the fact he calls the women who work for him "maidens." Some

would say this is just Boaz addressing Ruth personally but the other women he was referring to as a group. However, he could have done as the foreman did and called her a "damsel" which would have been more general like calling the others maidens. These are the small translation issues that can get lost when the words are not faithfully translated but more interpreted into English. The King James maintains such things and we should be thankful for it.

So why is it important? Because as far as we know the women who worked for him were all Israelite women. Perhaps some or most were foreign women who had come to his house as servants, but in these hard times in Israel I'm sure there were plenty of women in Israel who needed the work. No matter the case, calling Ruth daughter in this situation was to give her a designation that meant more than just a sister of his nation. Boaz was addressing Ruth as a family member. The fact he wanted her to take him seriously had to do with the fact he did not just see her as some woman he didn't know. Women of those days clearly fell under the protection of their husbands but also of all the male family members. This is why when the nation was counted, all males 20 and older were who was counted. (Num. 1:1-4) All males of all families who were of age were responsible for the care of the women and children in their family no matter how much the women and children may or may not outnumber the adult males of the family. Today, this kind of thinking is looked down on as male domination and no doubt some men are guilty of using it to their advantage. However, the system came about not as a way to hold women down but as a way to be sure men took on their God-

given responsibility in a world where sin made simple survival very often difficult, to say the least.

In calling Ruth daughter in this situation Boaz was making it clear to her she was part of the women he was directly responsible for. This brought the weight of what he was about to say that much more into focus. Boaz was about to instruct her, not on what she was allowed to do, but what she should do to remain under his umbrella of protection and care. First Boaz tells Ruth not to go looking for other fields to glean. He wanted her to pay attention to who his female workforce was and where they did work, that is where she was to glean. Ruth would be sure to remain in the fields owned and maintained by Boaz if she stayed close in following the women she was with at that time. This would keep her in the same realm of protection the women who worked for him were a part of. However, Ruth was not to be treated as just another female worker. He tells Ruth he had instructed his men not to touch her! Here again he's pointing out to Ruth that he considers her family. The foremen of the workforce would have command over the men and women under him but she was not one of those. As a daughter in Boaz's family she had entitlement to be protected but she was not one of the workers his men could give orders to. They were to respect her as they would any other of Boaz's family. In that same line Boaz clarifies that this also means she's entitled to the comforts and provisions available. He tells her when she's thirsty not to hesitate to go drink water from the bottles of water the men had drawn from the well.

In other words, she was entitled to all that was brought out to the field to help the workers through the day. The water bottles were no doubt kept under the shade of the tent and the provisions often included more than just water. Along with water, bread was used to keep the strength of workers up in those days. The bread would be lightly soaked in vinegar which probably doesn't sound too good to most of us today. However, vinegar, especially as they would have had in those times, is very akin to alcohol. That's not to say you can get drunk on vinegar but the same reason alcohol evaporates quickly applies to the vinegar they would have used on the bread. Alcohol alone can actually dehydrate a person in the heat in spite of the cooling effect it can cause, but that's why olive oil was also available to be put on the bread and with plenty of water to drink you have a great setup for keeping the workforce comfortable. There are still places in the Middle East today which employ this technique for staying cool and hydrated while working in hot conditions. This type of provision is what Boaz is speaking to Ruth about and it's hard to say how tight a reign was kept on the workers themselves for how often they could stop to get such provisions. However, considering Boaz was a caring man one has to believe it was often enough to be sure they were well cared for. Simply put, Ruth was not to worry about bringing her own food and water. What was provided was hers as she might need or want it!

Upon hearing this Ruth bows and falls on her face before Boaz asking what

she could possibly have done to gain such privileges from him when she was not a blood born member of the chosen nation, nor did Boaz even know who she was! Boaz counters this response by telling her, he may not have recognized her by sight but he was fully aware of how she dedicated herself to Naomi even though her husband (Naomi's son) had passed away. Boaz is also specifically impressed with the sacrifice Ruth made in leaving her family in Moab to follow Naomi to this land she had never been to and knew so little to nothing about. He assures her The God of Israel would reward her for the sacrifices she had made and the selflessness she had shown. In pointing out she had come to trust The One True God and was now under His protection as a member of the chosen nation we see words again of great beauty. Boaz says she will receive her reward from, "...the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." Ruth 2:12 These words bring me to tears so I cannot imagine Ruth giving her response without weeping for gladness as well. In the way it would have been done in those days to show deep respect for what Boaz has offered her she thanks him that he took the time to calm her fears and be so caring toward her, even in his words, in spite of the fact she was not blood born to his house!

To this Boaz tells her to simply start taking advantage of what he was offering her by eating with them when it was time, not limiting herself to just plain bread and water! She was to use the other things like the vinegar and as she sat beside the workers at mealtime she was given roasted grain to eat which exceeded her ability to eat it all. Then without waiting another minute she

rose up to get back to her gleaning so she could get all she could collect before the end of day. As she was out of ear shot, Boaz tells his men to let her glean whatever she wanted. Working so vigorously Ruth might even get into some of what they felt could have been raked and gathered into the sheaves but they were not to restrict her or attempt to correct her. In fact, Boaz tells them to purposefully be sloppy with handfuls here and there so there'd be even more for her to gather than normally would be left. Ruth would stay hard at work until it was time for the reapers to quit for the day, and then she'd do the work of beating out what she had collected in order to separate the useful grain from the unwanted hulls and stems. When she was done getting the grain separated out she had gathered about an ephah of barley. That is about the equivalent of a bushel or by weight, 48 pounds, which is just over 21.7 kilograms. It's actually amazing Ruth was even able to handle this much grain all at once!

Ruth would get this all into town to Naomi and when Naomi saw what she had gathered from gleaning, as well as the leftover she could not eat of the roasted grain she'd been given, Naomi couldn't believe her eyes! She enquires where Ruth could possibly have worked to gather so much. She was more than thankful to whoever it was, seeing how much God had blessed Ruth's efforts. Ruth tells Naomi she had worked gleaning in the field of Boaz that day and Naomi recognized the name immediately. Thus, Naomi really shows a reversal of her earlier thoughts about how God had left her empty and worships God saying He had been kind to both the living and the dead. In saying this she's talking

about the fact the living (her and Ruth) had not just been blessed with food to eat but God had given them a direct path to her husband's family! Naomi explains to Ruth that Boaz was not just family as in being part of the larger tribe they belonged to in Israel or as people of Bethlehem. Boaz was directly related to her husband and in the line of men whom the Law said should care for them. Ruth explains she not only got to be in his field for today but that Boaz had told her to stay with his harvesting crew all through the harvest. Naomi again recognizes the importance of what Ruth had been told and makes it clear to Ruth those were sure instructions. Ruth was not to go into another field because Boaz's workers might see her, and letting Boaz know such a thing he might believe Ruth didn't want what he was offering. Thus, Ruth was to follow the instructions of Boaz to the letter and only work with his workers!

Ruth followed her mother-in-law's warning and went into the fields with Boaz's female workforce which is exactly what Boaz had told her to do. She stayed with them all the way through the barley harvest as well as the wheat harvest but continued to return to Naomi and her house as home. Naomi no doubt loves for Ruth to live with her but just as she understood when she attempted to get both her daughters-in-law to return to their people instead of following her back to Israel, Naomi knows Ruth is too deserving of a happy life to simply live the remainder of her life with Naomi. She tells Ruth that she knows Boaz will be down at his threshing floor all night because he'd be in the process of working with the barley to ready it for storage. The process of threshing

the barley included using a shovel to toss the barley in the air and allow the evening breeze to blow away the unwanted chaff. This would leave the pure barley ready to store for later sale and use. Staying the night would be because he'd be working late doing such a thing, but he also would want to guard the valuable grain until it could be safely stored away. This is why Naomi felt so sure Boaz would be there all night. She explains to Ruth she still believes Ruth deserves more than the life of an old maid. So she tells Ruth to specifically clean herself up and get herself looking and smelling her best.

Ruth had worked with Boaz's females the entire season, no one would think a thing about her being at his threshing floor even at night. Any of the house that was around would respect her for who she was and she'd be safe to stay until Boaz had finished his work, eaten, and fell into a sound sleep. However, Ruth was not to let Boaz himself know she was there. Naomi was designing this encounter to be special and have meaning. Boaz would immediately understand when he became aware of Ruth's presence. If he knew she was there before he passed out from near exhaustion for the night, it would change everything, so Ruth was to listen and again do as Naomi told her to the letter if this was going to work. By this point, there's no reason to believe Ruth would fail to do just as she was instructed, but the end results could only have been the hand of God on Ruth's life!

Let's stay in God's Word!