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Handfuls On Purpose

Ketchum



\$15.⁹⁵

Handfuls On Purpose



Wood Cut by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, 1828. National Gallery, London

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Dr. Lance T. Ketchum

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Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Introduction and Overview

(Please read this overview before studying the lessons.)

Welcome to the study of the book of Ruth. Great things sometimes come in small packages. Such is the case with the little book of Ruth. The time you spend in the book of Ruth may prove to be one of the greatest investments of your life. It is God's love story to humanity. The setting for the book of Ruth is "in the days when the judges ruled."

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons" (Ruth 1:1).

During this period, God intended the nation of Israel to function as a Theocracy. God was to be their King and was to govern them through His Law and through various "Judges" who He raised up to deliver Israel from the consequences of her rebellion against God's Law. It is apparent that these people did not want a heavenly King, but a king "like other nations."

"⁴ Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, ⁵ And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. ⁶ But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD" (I Samuel 8:4-6).

The days of the Judges were, in most part, very dark days for the nation of Israel. The sin cycle continued to repeat itself with each succeeding generation. With each generation, there was a gradual and progressive movement away from obedience to the Word of God and of worship in truth.

Each new generation grew weaker and weaker, becoming more and more a nation of spiritual sickness and consumption (as typified by the two sons of Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion). Israel was very much like the Church of today. They wanted God's blessing

and provision for them, but not His authority over them or any responsibility to Him. They wanted a *distant* God when it came to their unfaithful practices, but a *near* God when it came to their wants and needs.

We find this great contrast in what is represented by the name Elimelech in Ruth 1:1 and the last verse of the book of Judges. The name Elimelech means, “God is my King.”

“In those days *there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25).

In Ruth 1:1-5, we see the consequences of that attitude.

“¹ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ² And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. ³ And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. ⁴ And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. ⁵ And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.”

The fact that Elimelech left Bethlehem with the intention of finding food and staying for only a short time (“sojourn,” v. 1) is not the problem. The problem is that it was an attempt to escape the chastisement of the LORD. That is not possible. When a believer moves away from God’s absolutes, judgment and chastisement will come. They are inevitable because in suffering and hopelessness people will cry out to God. That is God’s purpose in chastisement. God’s goodness leads sinners to repentance (Romans 2:4).

The days of the Judges were a history of failure through compromise and complacency. It is in this black, sinful historical setting that God records the story of Ruth - the story of His redeeming love. This is God’s love story for His creation written in white chalk on a *blackboard of sin*.

In Ruth 1:1, God draws our attention to the little town of Bethlehem in the land of the tribe of Judah. The name Bethlehem-

Judah literally translated means the “house of bread” in the land of “praise.” However, in this day of Israel’s history, there was no bread in the house of bread, nor praise in the land of praise.

To a people living for themselves and not for the LORD, God necessitates a famine to show the spiritual famine in the land. God wanted them to know that they were starving themselves spiritually. Instead of recognizing the problem and repenting, Elimelech and his family leave the “house of bread” in the land of praise and head for Moab. Moab was the sewer, the spiritual cesspool, of the area.

“Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph” (Psalms 108:9).

The word “washpot” in Psalm 108:9 means a *boiling cauldron for cleansing*. Moab was to be used of God as a *cleansing place* - a place where God would bring Israel (typified by Naomi) face to face with the cause of her chastisement.

What God wanted of Israel was for them to change the *way* they lived. Instead, they ran away from God’s chastisement and only changed the *place* they lived. Changing their place would not change their ways, because they had not changed their relationship with the Lord or their attitude towards Him. They needed a change of heart, not just a change of place.

In the book of Ruth, Naomi represents the nation of Israel. Elimelech, her husband, whose name means “God is my King,” represents the testimony of Israel to the world. However, that testimony was made at total contradiction by the way Israel lived *before the world* and *in the world*. Therefore, they destroyed their testimony and Elimelech died.

What we fail to see so often in the typology of Ruth is that Naomi (Israel) was spiritually unfaithful to her husband (God) and her testimony (God is my King). She proclaimed God to be her King, yet the world was her lover. God summed up the attitude and actions of Israel in Ezekiel 16:22-32, and the people with which they unfaithfully chose to inhabit the Land:

“²² And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.²³ And it came to pass after all thy

wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;) ²⁴ *That* thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street. ²⁵ Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. ²⁶ Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. ²⁷ Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary *food*, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. ²⁸ Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldest not be satisfied. ²⁹ Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith. ³⁰ How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these *things*, the work of an imperious whorish woman; ³¹ In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; ³² *But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband*” (Ezekiel 16:22-32)!

In order to understand the book of Ruth it is necessary to understand the biblical concept of the Kinsman Redeemer. Lewis Sperry Chafer says the following:

“ . . . (c) a lost estate could be redeemed by a kinsman (Lev.25:25). This practice becomes a type of Christ’s redemption. There were four requirements in the type as likewise four antitype; (1) A redeemer must be a near kinsman. To fulfill this Christ took upon Himself the human form, entered the race. (2) He must be able to redeem. The price of redemption must needs be paid, which in antitype was the blood of the Son of God (Acts 20:28; I Peter 1:18-19). (3) He must be willing to redeem (cf. Heb. 10:4-10). (4) He must be free from the calamity which occasioned the need of redemption, that is to say, he could not redeem himself. This was true of Christ, for He needed no redemption. According to the type of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, then, Christ offered sacrifice but not for Himself (Luke 1:35; Heb. 4:15).”¹

¹ Chafer, Lewis Sperry. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. VII. Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1976, 263-264.

In the Old Covenant, the concept of the Kinsman Redeemer relates mostly to the care of widows or children that had lost a husband or sons. The concept of the Kinsman Redeemer was to insure that property designated to one tribe remained within that tribe. The women would not be able to care for themselves or take care of the land in such a hostile environment. When a Kinsman redeemed his near kin's property, he also redeemed his kin's family and cared for them as his own. This view considered a man's wife(s) and children to be his possessions. The Levitical Law was specific about these matters.

“²⁵ If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away *some* of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold. ²⁶ And if the man have none to redeem it, and himself be able to redeem it; ²⁷ Then let him count the years of the sale thereof, and restore the overplus unto the man to whom he sold it; that he may return unto his possession. ²⁸ But if he be not able to restore *it* to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that hath bought it until the year of jubile: and in the jubile it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession. ²⁹ And if a man sell a dwelling house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; *within* a full year may he redeem it. ³⁰ And if it be not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that *is* in the walled city shall be established for ever to him that bought it throughout his generations: it shall not go out in the jubile. ³¹ But the houses of the villages which have no wall round about them shall be counted as the fields of the country: they may be redeemed, and they shall go out in the jubile. ³² Notwithstanding the cities of the Levites, *and* the houses of the cities of their possession, may the Levites redeem at any time. ³³ And if a man purchase of the Levites, then the house that was sold, and the city of his possession, shall go out in *the year of* jubile: for the houses of the cities of the Levites *are* their possession among the children of Israel. ³⁴ But the field of the suburbs of their cities may not be sold; for it *is* their perpetual possession. ³⁵ And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: *yea, though he be* a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. ³⁶ Take thou no usury of him, or increase: but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. ³⁷ Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. ³⁸ *I am* the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, *and* to be your

God. ³⁹ And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: ⁴⁰ *But* as an hired servant, *and* as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, *and* shall serve thee unto the year of jubile: ⁴¹ *And then* shall he depart from thee, *both* he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. ⁴² For they *are* my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. ⁴³ Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God. ⁴⁴ Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, *shall be* of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. ⁴⁵ Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that *are* with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. ⁴⁶ And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit *them for* a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour. ⁴⁷ And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother *that dwelleth* by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger *or* sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: ⁴⁸ After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: ⁴⁹ Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or *any* that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰ And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubile: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. ⁵¹ If *there be* yet many years *behind*, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. ⁵² And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubile, then he shall count with him, *and* according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption. ⁵³ *And* as a yearly hired servant shall he be with him: *and the other* shall not rule with rigour over him in thy sight. ⁵⁴ And if he be not redeemed in these *years*, then he shall go out in the year of jubile, *both* he, and his children with him. ⁵⁵ For unto me the children of Israel *are* servants; they *are* my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God" (Leviticus 25:25-55).

Another responsibility of the Kinsman Redeemer was to marry the widow of a dead kinsman that was without a son, and to

carry on his father's name. He was to marry her and raise the children to testify to the dead man's name.

⁵ If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her. ⁶ And it shall be, *that* the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother *which is* dead, that his name be not put out of Israel. ⁷ And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother. ⁸ Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and *if* he stand *to it*, and say, I like not to take her; ⁹ Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house. ¹⁰ And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

This text of the Law would play a big part in the story of Ruth as detailed in Ruth 4:5:

"Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy *it* also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance" (Ruth 4:5).

The typology existing between Boaz and the Lord Jesus Christ is also significant to understanding the book of Ruth. The Scofield Study Bible has the following note on Isaiah 59:20:

"Redemption: Kinsman type, summary. The goel, or Kinsman-Redeemer, is a beautiful type of Christ. (1) The kinsman redemption was of persons, and an inheritance (Lev. 25:48; 25:25; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:7, 11, 14). (2) The Redeemer must be a kinsman (Lev. 25:48-49; Ruth 3:12-13; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14-15). (3) The Redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4-6; Jer. 50:34; John 10:11, 18). (4) Redemption is effected by the goel paying the just

demand in full (Lev.25:27; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Gal. 3:13).”²

The Lord Jesus Christ fulfills the spiritual reality of which Boaz is the type. As detailed in the Scofield notes, Jesus fulfills each of the Law’s demands of a Kinsman Redeemer. Yet there are aspects of the type in Boaz that go beyond the expectations of the Law. Boaz’s love for Ruth reveals these aspects as well as the grace by which he ministers the Law to her and to Naomi. Christ came in love and in grace to redeem lost sinners.

“¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. ¹⁸ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16-18).

“⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).

In the Old Testament, poverty usually resulted in bondage to a master who would require redemption from that bondage. In the New Testament, God portrays the sinner as being bankrupt of righteousness. God portrays the sinner in bondage to the corruption of sin and cursed by the Law. Christ redeems believing humanity from the curse of the Law.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: . . .” (Galatians 3:13).

In doing so, He bought sinners out of the *market place of the corruption of sin* and brought them into His family declaring them to be adult children of God.

² Scofield, C.I. *The Scofield Study Bible*. New York: Oxford Press, 1996.

“For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14).

“To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:5).

Love is willing to pay any price necessary to redeem the person loved.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).

The degree of Christ’s love for lost humanity is measured by the price He was willing to pay to redeem them.

“⁹ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9-10).

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

The type represented by Boaz is temporal and physical in its ramifications while the reality in Christ is eternal and Soteriological in its application.

“¹⁹ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (I Corinthians 6: 19-20).

“²² For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ’s servant. ²³ Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men” (I Corinthians 7:22-23).

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14).

“¹⁸ Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: . . .” (I Peter 1:18-19).

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: . . .” (Romans 3:24).

Just as the *safe shelter* of the strength of Boaz’s household gave Ruth and Naomi security for the balance of their lives, so does the strength of Christ’s “household” give His redeemed eternal security.

“²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *the*] out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and *my* Father are one” (John 10:28-30).

“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:” (Jude 1:1).

We can say that the book of Ruth is like a play written in four acts. Act I begins with a man named Elimelech of the tribe of Judah in the city of Bethlehem in the land of Judah. There was famine in the land of Judah, so Elimelech takes his wife Naomi, their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to Moab with the intent of staying for a short time until the famine is over. While the family is in Moab, Elimelech dies. Shortly thereafter, his two sons take two Moabite women to be their wives. Mahlon marries Ruth and Chilion marries her sister Orpah. Then, after about ten years, the two sons die.

Naomi hears that the famine in Judah is over and decides to return home. Ruth and Orpah begin the journey with her. After Naomi considers the poverty waiting for her at Bethlehem, she encourages her daughters-in-law to return to their mother’s house. After considerable discussion of the matter, Orpah decides to return while Ruth vows to remain with Naomi regardless of the cost.

At the end of Act I they arrive in Bethlehem, where the

women of the city gather around Naomi in amazement at her loss. Naomi publicly recognizes her loss and the chastisement of God. She reflects that her life is no longer *pleasant*, but now very *bitter*. Therefore, she instructs the women to call her “Mara” meaning *bitter*, rather than “Naomi,” which means *pleasant*. Naomi and Ruth arrive in Jerusalem at the beginning of barley harvest, which lasted about seven to ten days. Acts II and III take place during those few days of barley harvest.

In Act II Boaz is introduced as a “kinsman” of Elimelech. He is a man with a strong house and considerable wealth. Ruth begins to glean in his field during the harvest of the barley, where she first makes his acquaintance. Boaz inquires of his servants as to who Ruth is. He apparently recognizes that she is part of his family and begins to make provision for her protection and care. Boaz invites Ruth to eat with his reapers where he personally passes her the *roasted grain* to eat, making her feel welcome. Boaz gives instruction to his *young men* to give Ruth special privileges, even to drop some “handfuls on purpose” for her to recover.

At the close of Act II, Ruth returns to the city of Bethlehem and to Naomi with her day’s bounty. She informs Naomi of her encounter with Boaz and his provision for her. Ruth continues gleaning in the fields of Boaz under his provisions throughout the barley harvest and the wheat harvest.

In Act III, we find Naomi and Ruth preparing to claim Boaz as Kinsman Redeemer. Boaz was *winnowing barley* at the “threshingfloor.” The “threshingfloor” was a hard-parched clay circular on top of a hill. In the late afternoon, a breeze would begin to blow and threshing and winnowing would begin. As long as the wind blew, the threshing continued. It often continued late into the night and early morning.

It would appear from Ruth 3:1-4 that Boaz was alone at the threshing floor. Of course that is not so. This was a time of feasting and all of the household would camp around the threshing floor. There were many people present. After the feast and work was over for the day, the men would sleep around the grain pile, using it as a backrest with their feet sticking out from it like spokes on a wagon wheel. They slept this way to keep potential thieves from stealing their grain.

Ruth was to wait until Boaz had finished feasting and to

mark where he laid down at the grain pile to sleep. Then Ruth came quietly and laid down at his feet making her request of him to be her *goel*. At midnight, something startled Boaz out of his sleep and he discovers Ruth at his feet.

Boaz commends her for choosing him rather than one of the younger men and promises her he will do everything he can. He also informs her that a “nearer kinsman” than he existed. She remains at his feet until just before sunrise, whereby Boaz informs the rest of his servants to remain silent about Ruth’s claim upon him.

Boaz fills her veil with as much barley as she can carry. She returns to the city of Bethlehem and Naomi. Naomi asks her (Ruth 3:16) if Boaz had accepted her request of redemption. At the end of Act III, Ruth informs Naomi of what Boaz instructed her to do. She is sitting waiting until he calls for her that same day as he promised (v. 18).

Act IV takes place at the city gates of Bethlehem. Boaz sees the nearer kinsman approaching and calls for him to come and do business. He then calls ten of the city elders to witness the transaction. Boaz lays out Naomi’s desire to sell a parcel of ground to a “redeemer.”

The “near kinsman” declares he will purchase the land. Then Boaz informs him that in the purchase of the land, he would also have the responsibility to Ruth, the wife of Mahlon, and to raise up a son to Mahlon’s name. Upon this information, the nearer kinsman relinquishes his right of redemption to Boaz. The nearer kinsman publicly removed his shoe before the ten witnesses and gave it to Boaz, sealing the matter. This signified he gave up his right of redemption for that property forever to Boaz.

Boaz marries Ruth with the blessing of the people that were at the gate (4:11-12). Ruth bears a son, which the neighbors of Naomi name Obed, which means “worshipper.”

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter One

Running Away From God

¹ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ² And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. ³ And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. ⁴ And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. ⁵ And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband" (Ruth 1:1-5).

Ruth is a wonderful little book of four chapters detailing the life of a woman named Ruth. Although it records an accurate history of a period of about eleven years, it is also a book of types represented by the individual characters in the book.

The book of Ruth gives us the first hint of the Church Age in the Old Testament represented by Ruth, the Gentile bride of Boaz (who is a type of Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer). Naomi represents the nation of Israel under chastisement and later, restoration and blessing.

In Ruth 1:1, we see the historical setting to be "in the days when the Judges ruled" (or judged). The Midrash (Rabbinical commentaries) makes Ruth a daughter of the Moabite king Eglon who Ehud killed in the first 100 years of the period of the Judges. However, Josephus (the Jewish historian at the time of Christ) places Boaz as a contemporary with Eli, which would put the events of the book of Ruth at the end of the book of Judges. This is about three-hundred years after the entrance into the Promised Land under Joshua (this seems the most probable). This fact is important in order to understand the overall spiritual climate of the nation of Israel during this historical period.

First, in order to understand the purpose of the "famine in the land" of Ruth 1:1, we need to go back to Judges 2:11-18 to see the

four-phase sin cycle of each succeeding generation of Israel.

“¹¹ And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim: ¹² And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that *were* round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger. ¹³ And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. ¹⁴ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. ¹⁵ Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed. ¹⁶ Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. ¹⁷ And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the LORD; *but* they did not so. ¹⁸ And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them” (Judges 2:11-18).

First Phase of the Sin Cycle: Judges 2:11-13

This phase begins with apathy and complacency toward the things of God and His expectations of holiness and purity. It culminates with the intermixing of pagan worship and worldly practices with the things of God. Eventually this progression would end with “forsaking” or abandoning the Lord (v. 12). The people then accepted total paganism and worldliness as each generation allowed a little more of God’s absolutes to slip through their fingers.

Second Phase of the Sin Cycle: Judges 2:14

Once they began to move away from purity and holiness (separation), God’s chastisement would come upon them in the degree necessary to turn them back to Him and His truths

(repentance). In Ruth, the chastisement is in the form of a famine that is a lesser degree of chastisement than a conquering and oppressive nation. The oppressive nation would attack, steal, destroy their possessions, ravage their wives and daughters, and enslave those left alive. In this second phase, God's hand of protection and blessing is withdrawn. It was God's intention to prove to His people that they could not survive without His help.

Third Phase of the Sin Cycle: Judges 2:18

Once the people were under chastisement and oppressed by their captors in slavery, they would begin to *remember* the God they professed to know and worship. They would begin to cry out to Him in prayerful repentance. God would hear their crying and groaning and have mercy on them.

Fourth Phase of the Sin Cycle: Judges 2:19

In this phase, God would raise up judges to deliver them out of bondage and lead them back to righteousness, holiness, and purity. According to Judges 2:19, this cycle repeats itself throughout the book of Judges and throughout the Old Testament. (It is also true of New Testament believers.)

“ And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, *that* they returned, and corrupted *themselves* more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (Judges 2:19).

However, notice the progressive increase in wickedness with each repeat of the sin cycle. This tendency continues today. This is why pastors need to teach each succeeding generation the same historic truths of God and encourage obedience in keeping these historic truths. The tendency is to invite the world and its corruptions into the home and into the church. When that happens, the Christian (individually), and the Church (corporately), begins to lose their distinctiveness and their power with God - separation from the world is critical to power with God. This is why there is a constant battle for each new generation in the Church. When moms and dads begin to become *soft* on the things of God, they are sealing the fate of their children under God's chastisement.

The last verse of the book of Judges provides another important point to our understanding of the book of Ruth.

“In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was right* in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25).

Ruth 1:1-5 represents the consequences of Judges 21:25. The people of Israel were very much like Christians today. They wanted God’s blessing and provision for them, but not His authority over them. They wanted God to be accountable to them, but they did not want to be accountable to Him. They wanted a distant God when it came to their unfaithful practices, but a near God when it came to their wants and needs. They wanted God to be a faithful husband to them, while they were an unfaithful wife to Him.

These things magnify the great contrast between Judges 21:25 and the name Elimelech of Ruth 1:1. Elimelech means *God is my King*. That was the testimony of Israel, but it was a lie. It was the farthest thing from the truth of their lives (the practice of their beliefs).

⁷ *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,* ⁸ *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me”* (Matthew 15:7-8).

Just like the Christians of today who say *Jesus is Lord*, it did not mean anything to them. Like the pick-up truck in a parking lot one day - on one side of the bumper was a sticker saying *Jesus Is Lord*. On the same bumper on the other side was a sticker promoting abortion.

In Ruth 1:1, Israel is in the second phase of the sin cycle. Famine is in the land. God’s chastisement is upon Israel to turn their hearts back to Him. Elimelech sees it as a small inconvenience and decides to “sojourn in the country of Moab.” (“Sojourn” refers to a short visit.) The problem is that Elimelech was trying to escape the chastisement of God. That is not possible.

The word “Bethlehemjudah” means the *house of bread in the land of praise*. At this point in history, there was no bread in the *house of bread* because there was no genuine praise in the *land of praise*. Instead of stopping and evaluating the change that was needed (repentance), Elimelech takes his family, leaves the *house of*

bread in the land of praise, and heads for Moab.

Moab was a wicked, Baalistic nation that descended from one of the two sons of the incestuous relationship of Lot with his two daughters (Benammi was the other son and was the father of the Ammonites). It is apparent that, although Lot got his two daughters out of Sodom, he never got Sodom out of his daughters. They transferred the wickedness of Sodom too their two sons. God would use Moab to turn the heart of Israel back to Him.

“ Moab is my washpot {*lit., boiling caldron for cleansing*}; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph” (Psalm 108:9).

God would use Moab as a cleansing place, where God would bring Israel (typified by Naomi) face to face with the cause of her chastisement. God wanted Israel to change the *way* they lived. Instead, like a rebellious teen-ager, they ran away from home to avoid God’s chastisement and only changed the *place* they lived. Changing the place they lived could not change their ways or restore them to the place of blessing and happiness. They needed a change of heart, not a change of place. We cannot proclaim God to be King (Lord) and at the same time be having a love affair with the world.

“¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:15-17).

When the happiness and joy of your Christianity is gone and chastisement is upon you, running from God is a dangerous thing to do. It was in running away from God’s fixed place (where God had put them) that showed how unfaithful Israel was to their testimony (God is my King). God *spanked* them. Instead of repenting and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation, they ran away from home. Things do not change much, do they?

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter One

Running Away From God

1. Ruth is a historical book representing about an 11 year period of history during the period of the Judges. It also is a book of types.
 - A. Of whom is Ruth typical?
 - B. Of whom is Boaz typical?
 - C. Of whom is Naomi typical?
2. Why is it important to understand the chronological period of the book of Ruth?
3. The reason behind the *famine in the land* of Ruth 1:1 is detailed in the four phase Sin Cycle of Judges 2:11-18. Detail these four phases.
 - A. Phase One, Judges 2:11-13: How does this truth apply to your life?
 - B. Phase Two, Judges 2:14: How does this truth apply to your life?
 - C. Phase Three, Judges 2:18: How does this truth apply to your life?
 - D. Phase Four, Judges 2:16: How does this truth apply to your life?
4. What does Judges 2:19 tell us about the repetition of this sin cycle in progressive generations?
5. What must we **do** for our children in order to help them avoid this sin cycle in their generation?
6. What must we **be** for our children in order to help them avoid this sin cycle in their generation?
7. What about Judges 21:25 is reflected by the consequences of Ruth 1:1-5?
8. What is the contrast of Judges 21:25 with the meaning of the name *Elimelech* in Ruth?

9. When Israel professed God to be their King, was that a truth manifested by the way they lived?

10. In what way is it similar today, when many Christians profess that Jesus is Lord?

11. What causes God to chastise His children? Is chastisement intended to punish them? What is the purpose of chastisement?

12. What does the word “sojourn” mean in Ruth 1:1?

13. What was Elimelech trying to do in response to God’s chastisement by going to Moab?

14. What is a literal translation of the word “Bethlehemjudah“?

15. From whom did the nation of Moab descend and why were they so wicked?

16. From Psalm 108:9, what does the word “washpot” mean and how does that relate to what God would do with the family of Elimelech in Moab?

17. God wanted Israel to change the _____ they lived. Instead, they ran away from God’s chastisement and only changed the _____ they lived.

18. We cannot proclaim God to be our King, and have a love _____ at the same time with the world.

19. How does I John 2:15 confirm the statement of your answer to the above question?

20. Do you think Christians ever *run away from home* when they come under chastisement?

A. Do you think that this is a spiritually mature thing to do?

B. Do you think that the person who would do so understands the principle of biblical discipline?

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Two

Learning To Fear the Lord

“¹ Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. ² And the name of the man *was* Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. ³ And Elimelech Naomi’s husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. ⁴ And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one *was* Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. ⁵ And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband” (Ruth 1:1-5).

If we are going to understand that Naomi typifies Israel, we need to understand Ruth 1:1 as it refers to what was happening in Israel at the time when the Judges ruled. Josephus³, the great Jewish historian at the time of Christ, places Boaz as a contemporary of Eli who judged Israel for forty years, from BC 1108 until BC 1068.

Before we look at Eli, who he was and what kind of man he was, we want to look at the military situation existing in Israel at the time of Ruth. Israel was in the second phase of the four-phase sin cycle of Judges 2:14.

“ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies” (Judges 2:14).

When the famine is removed from Israel, it is the fourth phase of the sin cycle as detailed in Judges 2:16.

“Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them” (Judges 2:16).

³ Josephus, Flavius. *Josephus Complete Works*. Translated by William Whiston. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1980.

According to Ruth 1:4, we know Naomi stayed in Moab about ten years or more. We also know from Old Testament chronology that if Eli was at Shiloh in BC 1108, he was there at the beginning of the eighteen year Ammonite oppression of Judges 10:6-8.

“⁶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him. ⁷ And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. ⁸ And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead” (Judges 10:6-8).

This is probably the cause behind the famine in the land of Israel as recorded in the book of Ruth. By the time Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, it was probably at the end of the Ammonite oppression when Eli and Jephthah were Judges in Israel. Jephthah judged in Gilead on the East side of the Jordan in the Transjordan area. Eli judged on the West side of the Jordan at Shiloh as High Priest of Israel. So in Judges 10:6-8, we find the spiritual condition of Israel at the time of the book of Ruth. **1 Samuel 2:12-17 and 22 tells us why this spiritual condition existed in Israel.**

“¹² Now the sons of Eli *were* sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD. ¹³ And the priests’ custom with the people *was, that*, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest’s servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; ¹⁴ And he struck *it* into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh unto all the Israelites that came thither. ¹⁵ Also before they burnt the fat, the priest’s servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. ¹⁶ And *if* any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and *then* take *as much* as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, *Nay*; but thou shalt give *me* now: and if not, I will take *it* by force. ¹⁷ Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred

the offering of the LORD . . . ²² Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled {*lit. assembled by troops*} at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (I Samuel 2:12-17, 22).

Needless to say, the Tabernacle environment was very ungodly. Eli was the High Priest. We find some details about what kind of man Eli was in I Samuel 1:12-14.

“¹² And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. ¹³ Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. ¹⁴ And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee” (I Samuel 1:12-14).

Hannah, a godly woman, replies to Eli’s accusation against her.

“¹⁵ And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I *am* a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. ¹⁶ Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto” (I Samuel 1:15-16).

Eli was accustomed to seeing drunken women in the Tabernacle and was apparently used to tolerating them. Why was Eli accustomed to seeing drunken women in the Tabernacle?

“ Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (I Samuel 2:22).

This was much more than sexual sin (as wicked as that was). In the religion of Baalism, the priests of Baal were also male prostitutes who had sexual relations with the women who came to the Temple of Baal to worship Baal. Hophni and Phinehas had actually incorporated Baalism into the Tabernacle worship of God. Jehovah was their God, but they adopted a form of Baal worship to worship Him. This was the military, spiritual, and religious atmosphere typified by Naomi in Moab. Is there any wonder why God’s chastisement was upon Israel and why there was famine in the land?

All during this time, Israel is proclaiming God to be her King. What was the name of the husband of Naomi again? (Elimelech) What did it mean? Why did Eli not do something about his sons? He did not act because his role as the High Priest was the next thing to being a king in Israel (there was no king at this time). Eli's sons would inherit his position.

What was the reason the people of Israel did not do something about the wickedness? They did not act because most of them did not really care. Many of them enjoyed it. Others just said it was not their problem. We should never forget that in all periods of history (of Israel or the Church), God has placed the responsibility for purity upon those calling themselves His children.

“¹ It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. ² And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³ For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, ⁴ In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵ To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? ⁷ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:” (I Corinthians 5:1-7).

Israel's leadership was not accountable to God because Israel was not accountable to God. Neither the people or the priests feared Him. God would use chastisement to teach them to fear Him.

“ The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning {*lit, the principal part*} of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

If a person can continue to live in the flesh without fearing God for the consequences, he needs to go back to *spiritual kindergarten*. Chastisement takes you there. How do you know if you are a Christian who lives in the flesh? You will know because you will manifest the “works of the flesh” through your life.

“¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

If any of the things listed in Galatians 5:19-21 are continually or habitually evident in your life, you need to be “born again” or you need to learn to fear the Lord. God will take you back to spiritual kindergarten with chastisement.

What was the first motivational truth every Jew was to teach His children?

“¹ Now these *are* the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do *them* in the land whither ye go to possess it: ² That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do *it*; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey” (Deuteronomy 6:1-3).

They were to teach their children to fear the Lord before they taught them to love the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). What does it mean to “fear the Lord”? It was an Old Testament phrase of piety. It combined a reverential trust of God with a hatred of evil (sin).

Have you taught your children to fear the Lord? Do you have a reverence of God and a hatred of any form of evil? If you do not, perhaps that is why your children do not fear the Lord.

Can you remember the last time one of your children saw something wrong on T.V. and you turned it off or changed the channel in the middle of a show? When was the last time you got angry over something you saw that was wrong? If righteous indignation does not boil in your soul because of the murder of thousands of babies each day, you do not fear the Lord! If you are not embroiled over young children being taught homosexuality as an

alternative lifestyle, you do not fear the Lord! If lying is the normal thing you do if you want to be elected or get somewhere in this world, you do not fear the Lord!

Do you think Naomi learned to fear the Lord after what happened to her in Moab? What would you think of someone who had to repeat kindergarten repeatedly? Chastisement always takes us back to *spiritual kindergarten*. Many Christians have had to repeat kindergarten often. Many of us will be back there repeatedly until we finally learn to fear the Lord.

If you have not learned to fear the Lord (reverence Him and hate sin), you do not know the God of the Bible the way He wants you to know Him. Why did Israel (and Christians today) not fear the Lord? God was not *real* to them. How do we know that?

“¹ And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. ² And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. ³ And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies” (I Samuel 4:1-3).

Israel had reduced the Ark of the Covenant to an idol. God was not real to them. If you do not fear the Lord, He probably is not real to you either. If you want to learn to fear the Lord, God has to become real to you. Learning to fear the Lord comes from an accurate knowledge of who and what He is. Yes, He is a God of love, but He is also a God who hates sin.

“¹⁶ These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: ¹⁷ A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹ A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Something that is an “abomination” is something that is

detestable and disgusting to you. To learn to fear God means to learn to have the same attitudes towards sin that He does, even the sin in your own life. When you have that attitude towards all sin, it will produce genuine repentance in your life.

Christianity is so much more than a bunch of rules and regulations. Christianity is defined as a personal relationship between a person and the living God who is the Creator of Heaven, earth, and all that is in them. That God loves you. All He asks of you is to love Him in return. To love Him means to trust Him reverentially as the one who created you and who knows what is best for your life.

Can you reverentially trust Him? Can you accept the fact that if God hates something, it is best if you learn to hate it too? To fear the Lord is a decision of the heart. Will you decide to fear the Lord today?

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Two

Learning To Fear the Lord

1. Of whom does Josephus (the Jewish historian at the time of Christ) tell us Boaz was a contemporary?
2. When did Eli judge Israel? BC 110_____ BC 106_____
3. Read Judges 2:14 and Ruth 1:1-5 together. What phase of the four-phase sin cycle was Israel in at this time?
4. Read Judges 2:16 and Ruth 1:6 together. What phase of the four-phase sin cycle was Israel in at this time?
5. Read Ruth 1:4. How long did Naomi stay in Moab?
6. Read Judges 10:6-8. What was happening in Israel that began in BC 1106?
7. From Judges 10:6-8 we can discover the conditions existing in Israel at the time of the book of Ruth. Read I Samuel 2:12-17. What was the spiritual condition behind all of this?
8. Read I Samuel 1:12-14. What do these verses reveal to us about Eli's character (compare 2:12 and 22)?
9. According to I Samuel 2:22, what had Hophni and Phinehas actually incorporated into the Tabernacle worship of Jehovah?
10. Why did Eli not do something about his sons? What was he trying to protect for future generations of his family?
11. Why did the people of Israel not rise up and do something about this wickedness at the Tabernacle of God?
12. Read I Corinthians 5:1-7. Upon whom has God placed the responsibility for a pure Church?
 - A. Does that mean the Church should be involved in a *witch-hunt* mentality?
 - B. When unrepentant people refuse to do what is right, who does God hold responsible to deal with them?

14. Why was Israel's leadership not held accountable to God by God's people?

15. Read Proverbs 1:7. What was the *kindergarten truth* Israel had not yet learned?

16. Read Galatians 5:19-21. What reveals a person who does not know enough to fear the Lord? How would that person recognize himself as someone who does not fear the Lord?

17. If you have not learned to fear the Lord, what will God have to do to teach you to do so?

18. From Deuteronomy 6:1-3, what was the first motivational truth every Jew was to teach his children?

19. Define what it means to fear the Lord. The fear of the Lord is a reverential _____ of God accompanied by a _____ of evil.

A. Do you suppose God might begin to measure the success of parenthood by this standard?

B. Based upon the above definition of the fear of the Lord, do you think you have taught your children to fear Him?

C. Based upon the above definition, can you honestly say you fear Him?

D. If you as a parent do not fear the Lord, do you think you will be able to teach your children to fear Him?

E. If this is all true, does your success as a parent and the success of succeeding generations of Christians depend upon you learning to fear the Lord?

20. Define *righteous indignation* and how it relates to the manifestation of the fear of the Lord in a life.

21. From the foundation we have laid thus far, how important to the Lord is our learning to fear the Lord?

22. Read 1 Samuel 4:1-3. What was Israel's attitude toward the Ark of the Covenant that reveals that God was not real to them?

- A. Is God real to you?
- B. How do you know if He is real to you?

23. Read Proverbs 6:16-19. What are some of the *things* that God *hates*?

24. If you fear the Lord, will you have learned to hate these things too?

25. Define *ABOMINATION*.

- A. Is that your attitude toward the things of Proverbs 6:16-19?
- B. If not, do you fear the Lord?

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Three

Removing the Blinders of Time to See the Blessings of Eternity

“⁶ Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. ⁷ Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters in law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. ⁸ And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. ⁹ The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each *of you* in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept” (Ruth 1:6-9).

Most people live and think in a temporal way. We often lock our plans for the future into temporal thinking. The whole book of Ecclesiastes reveals we are “under the sun” (this life only) thinkers. We are blind to the reality of another existence beyond the existence known by human senses.

“⁹ But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (I Corinthians 2:9-12).

In Ruth 1:7, Naomi is ready to leave Moab (God’s boiling cauldron for cleansing, Psalm 108:9). She went to Moab with her husband (Elimelech) because there was famine in the land of Judah due to God’s chastisement. In Moab, the family of Naomi tried to escape that chastisement. In reality, they were running away from God’s appointed place for them (Bethlehem). They ran away from home like rebellious teenagers not wanting to live under dad’s and mom’s rules. God wanted them to change the *way* they live.

Instead, they only changed the *place* they lived. While at Moab, they would learn to fear the Lord. To fear the Lord is a reverential trust of God accompanied by a hatred for evil.

To review the types, Naomi represents Israel under chastisement and restoration. The name Elimelech means *God is my king* and represents the destroyed testimony of Israel due to her spiritual unfaithfulness in idolatry and disobedience. In Ruth 1:3, Elimelech dies. Mahlon and Chilion represent the next generation of the children of Israel and the effect the unfaithfulness and idolatry the preceding generation had upon them. Their names mean *sickness* and *consumption*. The same principles continue through all generations, even to today. In Ruth 1:4, that generation dies in Moab.

Naomi (Israel) is alone in the middle of a Gentile nation in an unscriptural unity of illegitimate marriages to Gentile women. Israel had lost her distinctiveness as a people of God due to her failure to live according to the statutes and commandments of God. In Ruth 1:6, we find the story expanding beyond the failure in Moab to God's restoration in Bethlehem. This is the fourth phase of the sin cycle. Israel under chastisement cries out to God for deliverance. God answers. The famine is over.

Once again, there is bread in the House of Bread (Bethlehem; Ruth 1:6). This may typify the coming of Messiah. It is certainly true that God's intention in redemption is to redeem both Jew and Gentile alike.

“ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek {or Gentile}” (Romans 1:16).

“¹² For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:12-13).

In Ruth 1:7, we find a Jewish woman joined together with two Gentile women because of the marriage compromise of her two sons. These three women begin to head to the House of Bread (Bethlehem) in the Land of Praise (Judah) because the “Lord had visited His people” in giving them bread. This is another reason this may typify the coming of Messiah.

“³² Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. ³⁴ Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. ³⁵ And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. ³⁷ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. ³⁹ And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴¹ The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:32-41).

On the journey (Ruth 1:8) to the Land of Praise, Naomi begins to tell her Gentile daughter-in-laws what they will have to give up if they go with her. Naomi knew what awaited her at Bethlehem - poverty, servitude, and difficulty. In this time of great difficulty, Naomi seems completely ignorant of God’s intent to restore her and His overwhelming love for her. God’s hand of correction had touched her life.

In such moments, people do not see the love and grace of God behind it all. She filled her thinking with discouragement, hopelessness, and despair. She saw herself in a hopeless situation (Ruth 1:12). It is from this perspective she speaks to her two daughter-in-laws (Ruth 1:12-13).

When Naomi says, “For it grieveth me,” she reveals that she is filled with bitterness because of the “hand of the LORD” (referring to her chastisement). Naomi is still seeing her situation from a *temporal* perspective of life. She just cannot seem to see beyond her own circumstances to see God’s eternal working in her life. As a result, each misfortune of her life increases her bitterness toward God and the hopelessness of her situation. Like many people, Naomi is making decisions in life based upon a fatalistic view of God’s workings.

These kinds of difficulties often rise like a mountain range on the horizon, blocking our view of God’s eternal workings. Paul

(the Apostle of hope) helps every Christian to look beyond the inconveniences of this life to beyond the mountain ranges of pain and suffering into the eternity. We must learn to keep our vision fixed upon the eternal.

“ If in this life only { *‘under the Sun’* } we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (I Corinthians 15:19).

You only have one life to live. Live it to the fullest. This seems to be Naomi’s philosophy of life. Solomon possessed this same “under the sun” perspective for the majority of his life.

“¹ The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. ² Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity. ³ What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? ⁴ *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (Ecclesiastes 1:1-4).

In Ecclesiastes 1:1-4, God reveals to us a man locked into a box called time. Solomon cannot seem to see out of it. The result of this restricted vision is a life of selfish pursuits ending in cynicism, bitterness, and self-pity. God gives him a glimpse into eternity, but he just cannot seem to see beyond the walls of the box into which he has put himself.

For the Christian the answer is simple. **It is the Book. It is the Book.** Learn to look at life through the eternal truths of the Word of God. Until we learn to do so, we (like Solomon and Naomi) will continue to make bad decisions based upon what we see with our physical eyes. We will not see the spiritual reality available only to those with eyes of faith.

“¹² I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised {or, to afflict them} therewith. ¹⁴ I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit. ¹⁵ *That which is* crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. ¹⁶ I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of

wisdom and knowledge. ¹⁷ And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow” (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18).

However, even though it took a lifetime, Solomon got a new perspective on life.

“ I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him” (Ecclesiastes 3:14).

“¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. ¹⁴ For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

All human beings are eternal. We will spend eternity somewhere. When we get our vision locked into a *temporal* (“under the Sun”) perspective, we will begin to define God by what happens to us in this life. We even begin to define ourselves by what happens to us in this life. The spiritual reality is that God completely transcends this world and all that is in it (along with our souls). Satan does not want our vision of life to escape this world to see beyond this life into eternity.

“³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

Your life is but a small parenthesis in a short sentence in a never-ending volume of a novel called eternity. When we cannot (or when we refuse to) look beyond the parenthesis of our life to see the whole of which we are part, Satan will defeat us. When we do not keep our vision focused on God and eternity, we will end up wallowing in bitterness and self-pity just like Naomi. We will end up giving the kind of counsel that Naomi gave to Orpah and Ruth. From bad testimonies, there will always be the Orpahs who will abandon Christ and the difficulties of the Christian life to return to the world of comfort and convenience (which were really

her old gods, 1:15).

Christ never said the Christian life would be easy. In fact, He said it would be just the opposite. The Christian must learn to cultivate a perspective of life that transcends this life and this world.

“¹³ Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴ Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow {*literally: hard*} *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

The Christian must learn to make choices and decisions in this life based upon a foundation of truth that transcends this life. Every decision and choice we make in this life affects eternity. Not just for ourselves, but also thousands of others living now and in the future. This is not about *pie in the sky*. We need to understand we are already living in our eternity. Just as the choice you made to get an education determined the job you presently have and the life you provide for yourself and your family, the elementary decisions we make every day in our present life will determine the eternal destiny of hundreds (perhaps thousands) of people, including yourself.

The first and foremost question of life is simple. What have you decided to do about Christ and your need of salvation? Are you saved and sure of it? If not, when you finally step outside of your box called time (by death) and see your eternity for the first time, you are going to be in for quite a shock. That eternity will never change from that point forward.

The second question is, “If you are saved (“born again”), what have you decided to do with your new life in Christ?” The decisions you make are eternally important. You have just one life to live. You can invest it in this doomed world, or you can invest it into eternity by investing your life in truth. You can invest it into eternity by living that truth and by sharing the Gospel with others. Then, when you step out of this box called time into your eternity, you will find familiar faces of friends and family. That eternity will never change.

Those decisions are up to you. Is your Christianity real enough to invest the only lifetime you have left into eternity? The time to decide that is *now*!

Handfuls On Purpose

Studies in the Book of Ruth

Chapter Three

Removing the Blinders of Time to See the Blessings of Eternity

1. From Ruth 1:7, what was “the place where she was” and why was she there?

Some Questions for Review

2. What was Naomi’s husband’s name and what does it mean?

3. While under chastisement in Moab, what was God teaching Israel?

4. What does Naomi typify in the narrative of the book of Ruth?

5. What does Elimelech typify?

6. What do Mahlon and Chilion represent?

7. What two verses from the book of Romans show us God’s desire to redeem both Jew and Gentile equally?

A. Romans 1: _____

B. Romans 10: _____

8. From Ruth 1:7-8, where specifically does this all take place? Is it in Moab, in between Moab and Judah, or at Bethlehem?

9. What kind of life did Naomi expect to have, once she returned to Bethlehem/Judah?

10. From Ruth 1:12 and 13, what was Naomi lacking at this point in her life, which is the direct cause of her counsel to Orpah and Ruth?

11. What is her perspective on life and eternity from which her counsel flows?

12. What was the result of Naomi's perspective on her attitude toward God and toward life in general?

- A. Has that ever been in your perspective on life and caused you to have similar attitudes toward God and your life in general?
- B. Do you think that perspective allowed you to be fair toward God and toward life?

13. Paul was an Apostle of many things. Paul certainly was the Apostle of _____.

14. What does Paul mean in I Corinthians 15:19 by "If in this life only we have hope in Christ"? To what point in this life must we constantly be looking beyond in order to maintain a healthy eternal perspective?

15. According to Ecclesiastes 1:1-3, what is an "under the Sun" perspective of life?

- A. What was the *box* into which Solomon's mind was locked that blocked his vision of eternity?
- B. How do faith and trust in God help us escape that box in our present life? How do faith and trust change our perspective?
- C. How should that change in perspective change our decision making process?

16. When we are locked into a *temporal* ("under the sun") mentality, how does that affect the way we define God?

- A. From that same perspective, how do we begin to define ourselves and our self-worth?
- B. Do you think that perspective can give an accurate definition of God or ourselves?
- C. If not, how important is it to change that perspective in our lives?

17. What does Satan want to keep your vision (perspective) fixed upon?

- A. What does Satan want to keep your vision (perspective) away from?