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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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Step Into the Springs!

For the seventeenth year, Living Springs Institute has published its daily planning calendar that gives you the Biblical calendar alongside the calendar most of us use every day. Since early 2018 the companion book, titled *Counting The Days*, has also been available. If you're a regular mail subscriber to this publication and have not already received a calendar before then, you should receive one with the Nov./Dec. issue of *Shaqah*. We'd also like to send calendars to all of our e-mail subscribers, but we don't necessarily have your current physical mailing address. Your 2025 calendar will be waiting for you, so be sure to contact us and put in your order today!

The planning calendar is a great Biblical education product but even if you don't use/want the calendar, the companion book, *Counting The Days*, is still a book you're going to want to read. With a full example calendar in the back, this book is a great way to learn about the Biblical/Jewish calendar all by itself. *Counting The Days* is an overall teaching about the calendar and feasts God gave in the Law, but more specifically, it teaches the how and why God set up a calendar that contains distinct events, all of which prophesy about God's plan for our existence. It covers what each event prophesies about, why there is a Biblical and Jewish calendar, and much more! Of course, many of you have already received a copy of the book, but if you do not have one you will want to receive a copy when you order your 2025 calendar. If you already have a 2025 calendar, it should have come with a pink card inside that you can simply fill in with your name and address, and for only the price of a stamp you can order your copy of *Counting The Days*!

I repeat again this year, by no means is Living Springs a ministry backed by a lot of money, but God, in His grace, has made a way for us to still offer the 2025 daily planning calendar and copies of *Counting The Days* for FREE! To order your free

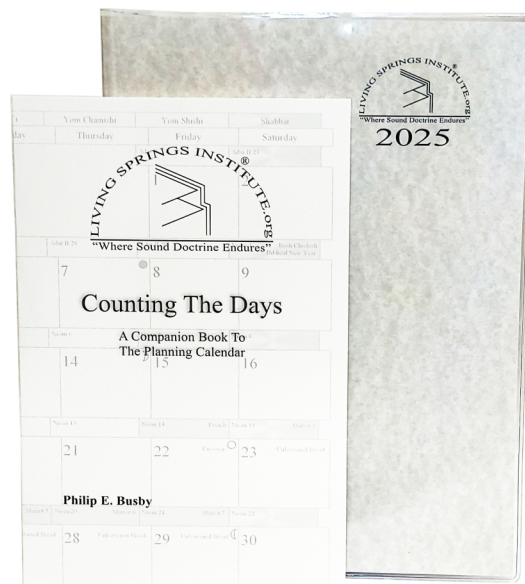
copy(s) of the 2025 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, you can simply write, e-mail, or visit us online. For online orders, just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org, click on the "Resource Shop" button, order the 2025 calendar and/or *Counting The Days*, and type your mailing information into the lines provided on that form. To order more copies than the form allows, please use the comment box. If you are using e-mail, send your request to: resources@shaqah.com. If you're using regular mail, write to us at: Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like the 2025 calendar and/or *Counting*

The Days. Be sure to give us your physical mailing address, and your order will be on its way as soon as we can process it!

For those of you who may never have ordered anything from Living Springs, know that ordering will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs is happy to send people only what they request. Thus, we want to remind everyone that we also offer other teaching products, and all for free! If you would like a free subscription to this publication (*Shaqah*), don't forget to make that request when you write. We also produce a PDF version of the calendar, along with many other materials in PDF, which you can download from our website at

anytime.

In closing, I just want to say thank you, and please remember to share Living Springs Institute with others so they too may learn and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! This year it's been more than a struggle to get this issue and calendar ready and out to all of you. Thus, we appreciate your patience. Only God can make it possible to get the work done but as long as He makes a way we will keep giving it our all. May God bless each of you for your prayers and support, and as always, we pray you will be blessed by this issue of *Shaqah*!



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Last segment we continued the overview of the Book of Ruth. In that part we covered the fact Naomi had returned to Israel with Ruth and what a great time of year it was for them to return. This was due to the fact they actually arrived right at the beginning of harvest and in doing so got Ruth to Israel in time to take part in Passover which begins the Biblical feast cycle; furthering the fact Ruth was truly joining the chosen nation. This was important because Ruth would show how determined she was to live and provide for her and Naomi to live in this land. She wanted to be allowed to go to the fields during the harvest and glean as the Law said poor people could do in Israel. Naomi allowed her to go and God, once again, led Ruth's life as she would end up gleaning in the field of Boaz. Not only was Boaz a true man of God and deeply caring, he was the very family Ruth would have leaned on if she had been an Israelite woman who lost the husband she lost. At the end of the day we find Ruth returned to Naomi and she immediately recognizes the blessing this was for Ruth. Thus, we ended last segment covering the words Naomi instructed Ruth for how to present herself to Boaz in the right way. All this brought the overview to Ruth chapter 3 verse 3 and we will continue with that verse this time.

Naomi had not only instructed Ruth to look and smell her best so she could go down to Boaz in the evening at his threshing floor but she gave Ruth specific instructions not to let Boaz know she was there until after he had totally finished his day, including eating and drinking his evening meal. Of course Boaz, having done a hard days work would be ready to pass out with exhaustion at that point and Naomi knew this. She tells Ruth to wait and be sure she knew where Boaz laid down to sleep. This was important because several men might be working with Boaz and while not making herself known to be there Ruth needed to be sure she knew she was approaching the right man for what she was to do next. After Boaz had laid down Ruth was to go in and lay at his feet. The idea was to be literally laying at his feet so he would know when he woke up that she was there. This might seem like a very strange thing to tell Ruth to do but it would have significance to Boaz as the custom of the day gave Ruth the right to do this if she truly belonged in a particular position within his house.

To be clear, people of those days more often than not slept in the same clothing they wore during the day. This would be very true considering the circumstances of the men not being in their homes but sleeping at the threshing floor to guard the grain. Ruth was also not to lay down beside Boaz as one who is sleeping with another would do. She was to sleep perpendicular to him at his feet. The reason she was to do this is because in the culture of the day this was a right of a master's servant. People would sleep on mats made of skin or some type of cloth. For ease of use it made sense for such a bedding to be large enough to be wrapped over the top of the person if they wanted warmth or it could be folded in half for greater padding. Either way, it was the right of a servant to lay at his or her master's feet. This both made it clear who the servant belonged to should they sleep

within the view of other people or as part of a bigger group.

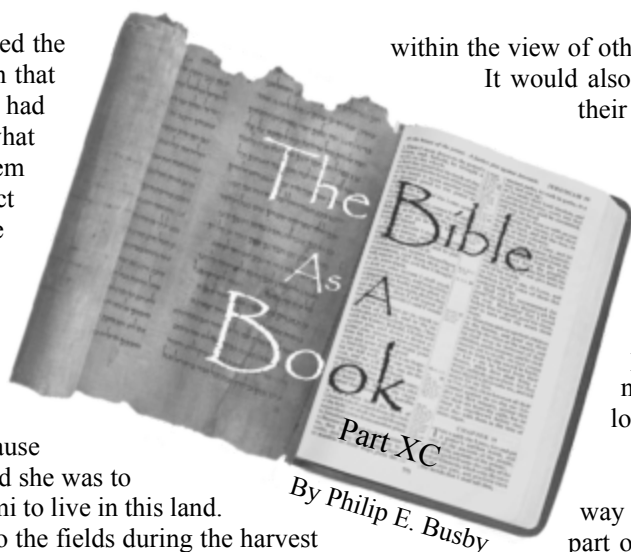
It would also give the servant perfect contact with their master so as to offer their services when the master woke up or if there was some disruption during the night. Servants often carried all the load for their masters and would not necessarily carry bedding for themselves specifically nor would they take up the extra space to put a whole other mat down for the night, so this custom worked out on a lot of levels.

Boaz had already spoken to Ruth in a way that made it clear he considered her a part of his family and under his protection.

Ruth had gone back to Naomi every night after gleaning in the fields with Boaz's servants. Thus, she didn't require accommodations of any kind like the other servants of Boaz might have needed. However, this night was to be different. Ruth would get herself cleaned up and return to Boaz that evening to stay with his house as one of his servants. This makes what she did a hybrid, of sorts, of traditions. On one hand, Ruth would offer herself to Boaz as a full servant by laying at his feet. He could choose to take her in or reject her, the choice was his. On the other hand, she was presenting herself as one of the women of his family. She would be at the threshing floor like one of his servants but she would be cleaned up and dressed in attire more appropriate for coming to a man as a possible candidate to be his future wife! Boaz was already aware that Ruth had come back with Naomi and that she had been married to one of his close family members. Thus, the meaning of Ruth presenting herself to Boaz in this way would be clear!

So why was she to do this so secretly? Why not just walk up to him as he was eating dinner and present herself? If such questions linger in your mind it's perfectly understandable, but they can all be explained by realizing many of us are blinded to the beauty of what Naomi told Ruth to do by our modern way of thinking. It would have been incredibly bold and inappropriate for Ruth to walk up and present herself all cleaned up and obviously showing herself to be interested in Boaz. It also would have put Boaz on the spot in front of others who were clear on what Ruth's return that night was for! Neither Naomi or Ruth wanted to assume anything in spite of the hope beyond hope Naomi had in what God had already led to transpire. Yes, the Law lays out a line of succession, if you will, for who should marry a woman should her husband die before they had any children but lest we forget, Ruth was not of Israel by birth! On top of that, she had not married into the family she found herself a part of because she had come to Israel and joined the nation prior to meeting her late husband. Ruth and her husband likely would never have met if Naomi's family had not separated from Israel in search of what they felt would be a better life!

All this means there really was no right for Naomi and certainly not Ruth to obligate Boaz in any way to "follow the Law" concerning Ruth. Naomi would instruct Ruth in a very wise course of action which would open the door for the most positive outcome to become reality but also give Boaz all the room he needed to slam that door shut in one way or another if



Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we continued to talk about Isaac being in Gerar among the Philistines but not for the sake of being among Philistines. Gerar was a place of commerce where food could be found during a famine. However, there God spoke to Isaac and those words were what we talked about last time in more detail. We discussed how in God's words there is a repetitiveness some would dismiss but which in truth has real meaning we need to be clear on. God was confirming to Isaac that His promises to Abraham had passed to him but Isaac needed to do as his father had done in trusting and obey God in spite of the hardships he faced at the time. The obey part has a lot to do with the fact God wanted to be sure Isaac didn't get caught up by life's way of carrying us in directions we didn't intend to go. Isaac was to stay in Canaan because that was the land God promised to give his seed and that land is what God wanted Israel to see as their ancestral home. Come famine, conflict, and many other trials it was Isaac's job, as it had been his father's before him, to solidify this by continuing to sojourn in Canaan and allow his faith to be the evidence of what Isaac had not yet seen! (Heb. 11:1) This brought us to Genesis chapter 26 verse 5 and we will continue in that verse this time.

We truly ended last time talking about the fact Abraham had real faith which led him to obey God even when he did not fully understand why God was asking certain things. We talked some, once again, about that subject that faith is not blind belief but that does not mean we understand all things all at once and in the moments we want to understand them. Thus, trusting God is a big part of faith but that trust leads to the understanding we lack. The only question is how and when we will receive it. When we talk about that subject it can be hard because we as fleshly humans desire immediate gratifications. It is that desire being so great in the flesh that causes the church to fall back on the false teaching that faith is blind belief. It's almost like saying, keep your expectations low when it comes to knowing what God's really up to. This has led to a great deal of wrong among Christians who have been left vulnerable to every wind and wave of doctrine other people come up with that sounds good. (Eph. 4:11-16) People in our day are very fond of saying, "Everything happens for a reason" and in saying that, insinuate it must be God's will because that's true. I know I've hit on this a lot of late but that's because it's just so important we not think that way!

Things do happen for a reason, but as true believers we can't afford to stumble through life doing what we want and/or going with the flow believing everything happens for a reason and somehow that makes it a positive thing even in ways and at times we see things as negative. We must understand this because not everything God wants to happen is going to be seen as positive. It's true, God often asks hard things of us but to truly obey God's voice is to endure the negative things that happen because God asks us to go through them and let God help us avoid the negative things that can and do happen if we are not in His will. This is the very thing we are discussing when it comes

to Isaac staying in Canaan! At the very moment we are studying, Isaac and his household are struggling to survive in Canaan because of a famine that is ravaging the land. This is the entire reason Isaac goes to Gerar. Food could be found in Gerar because it was coming from places like Egypt where there was no famine. It would have been quite easy for Isaac to believe and feel the famine was God's way of saying, go down to Egypt and live there. After all, if the famine happened because God has a plan and a purpose for everything that happens then maybe God was trying to force Isaac out of his "comfort zone" in southern Canaan, but that would have been totally wrong! This is why God comes to Isaac to confirm he was to stay in Canaan even if that didn't make sense.

The truth is, maybe the famine did happen because God wanted to teach the Canaanites a lesson at the time; the details of which are outside the information given to us in this story. On the other hand, the famine may have simply come due to mismanagement of the land and resources. There can be no doubt the famine happened for a reason but nothing about that reason had anything to do with God wanting Isaac to move or make a change. How do we know this? Because it's right there in the verses we're studying but remember, Isaac wasn't reading this story he was living it! As I emphasized many times last segment, Isaac was the human on the ground living this story we are reading and that means he had all the same kind of emotions any human might have when faced with the hardship of a famine. The way he knew what God wanted of him in that situation was not by taking the path of least resistance all the while singing, everything happens for a reason. He knew God's will because he listened to God's voice and that's why we have the story we're studying which confirms Isaac stayed in Canaan simply because that's what God asked of him!

I know many people might believe this portion of the story is a simple prelude to what comes after it but it really is not. As we covered last time, both Abraham and Isaac were walking along and being used of God to bring about the chosen nation because they were men who would listen to God and accomplish the correct things to make that happen one day and in the right way. This is exactly why in the next generation of this family God could not use Esau! Esau was not a man who listened to God or cared to do anything but go with the flow. Jacob, on the other hand, was a man who made so many mistakes it's astounding God was able to use him either! Many things happened in Jacob's life for a reason and that reason(s) was that he was impulsive. In the Gospels we see an apostle of Jesus who also fits this profile. The truth of both men's stories is that God can use people of very different personalities if, at the very least, they have a heart that tries to hear God's voice. Among their impulsive actions God was able to insert the truth and move them forward. It's like the old saying, God can use a worm to beat an elephant if He can get a wiggle out of the worm! Obeying God's voice often comes with mistakes but that's acceptable if we'll just keep trying to hear God and not allow those mistakes

to take us in the direction that just accepting everything happens for a reason and I won't worry about the why.

A point I feel like I've been beating on of late is that the reason things happen aren't always the way God would have guided them had people followed what He wanted and cause to happen what should have. In other words, the little fairy tale about fate stepping in and seeing us through is totally wrong. What ultimately saved Jacob from his impulsive actions taking him to total ruin was that he cared about the things of God in a way that was far more than lip service. His impulsiveness took him on a very round about road to get where God wanted him to be in many cases, but he got there because he never stopped believing and trying to learn how to hear God's voice like his father and grandfather had before him. This kind of thinking is about the only way a positive thought pattern of saying everything happens for a reason is not a total disaster in every case. However, I repeat, if God can use us when we do things that cause things He did not desire to happen, there is just no telling what God could accomplish in and with our lives if we had listened in the first place!

If we truly seek to hear God's voice as Abraham and Isaac did, we can avoid many of the missteps in life we take and even in the times when things seem bleak we can feel assured we're accomplishing God's will, not just accepting that everything happens for a reason. This entire subject is a big part of that small degree of getting things wrong I talk about mostly when discussing the understanding of Scripture. To some there may seem to be little to no difference between simply accepting everything happens for a reason and being assured that what's happening to you is God's will for your life but the difference doesn't have to be huge. If it were it'd be obvious and we couldn't be so easily fooled by the idea simple acceptance is the way to live for God. It also wouldn't be so easy for people who just want to ignore the difference and accept the wrong path(s) in life. That brings us back to the, "faith is blind belief" idea. The truth is, while it might not seem to be a big deal to just go with the flow instead of knowing the why God wants us to endure what we endure or take the path He wants us to take, the end result is a far, far cry from not knowing the path we're on is what God wants us to be on. This is what was going on with Isaac and Abraham before him. They were useful in a way others who did not learn to hear God's voice just could not have been!

Far too many people professing Christianity today have fallen victim to the "faith is blind belief" idea by thinking if they had made a verbal commitment to follow God and do the standard things the church tells them they are to do (which can vary wildly from church to church), whatever happens from there must be God's will. If Isaac had thought that way he very likely would have ended up in Egypt, and only God knows what that would have meant for the establishment of the chosen nation and their ownership of the promised land! In Isaac's lifetime there might not have seemed to be a huge difference between staying in Canaan or going to Egypt, and maybe there would not have been. However, no matter how true or not true that might have been, staying in Canaan was not about Isaac. It was not about Abraham. These first two generations of the chosen nation were about establishing truths for the future. The

impact on future generations would have been enormous! Just look at Jacob once again. His impulsiveness got him in such a tangle of things he almost ended up bound to his uncle's house so tightly there was no way to leave. On top of that he had ended up back in the land Abraham had come out of which was exactly what Abraham didn't want Isaac to end up doing.

So how did Jacob get out? The answer is that his drive to go "home" made it impossible for him to stay in spite of it seemingly being impossible to go. Jacob was determined to get back to Canaan, and why? Because Canaan was the place he grew up. Canaan was the place where his mother and father lived. Canaan was where his grandfather and grandmother were buried. Abraham might have been a stranger in a strange land while living in Canaan. Isaac could easily tell himself there was no reason to stay in Canaan because it was just a place his father had ended up during his travels and Egypt was just another place further down the road, but not Jacob. To Jacob, Canaan was home and this would be important in extreme ways because this thought needed to be something later generations had, no matter if they listened to God's voice or simply followed their own fleshly desires. This is how the chosen nation was established. I have said it many times and it's so important to understand, God knew He could not build a true nation, as men build nations, of people who listened to Him as Abraham and Isaac listened. Part of the point of forming a chosen nation was to prove that very point!

From the post-flood ideas that cause man to begin building what we call the Tower of Babel, man has believed that conglomerating into larger and larger groups is the right way to live. To this very day people believe if the world could just all come together as one to live in peace and harmony everything would be great. Men believe this so greatly they end up taking away a lot of the peace and harmony the world could live in because they are trying to force us into a state of world peace through centralization of power. God gave us a chance to live in peace without turning from Him even if we didn't pay much attention to Him. If man had not taken of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil man could have lived without war because we would find no reason for the kind of hate and anger many people are even raised to have in our world today. When we push for utopia in our world we end up accusing certain people of standing in the way of that effort. In turn we see the need to eliminate such people and the irony very well might be that those people view us as being what stands in the way. There are all kinds of factors to why people fight each other. We see it from squabbles and fights children get into with each other all the way to the all-out wars nations fight against each other. Many people have a lot of ideas about how to make it all stop but the truth is, man needs a totally righteous mediator who can settle our disputes before they become something more troublesome. For that, there is only one being in the entire universe and that's The God Who created us!

Before we had the knowledge of good and evil God could have easily guided us, and even people who chose to do wrong things that affected others would have been set straight because God would always have been right there to settle such things. Not everyone would have to have been sold out to God to hear His voice because His voice would simply have been the

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LXIV

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

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

As we continue our look at the history that shows us how the Roman Empire came to be looked at as a Christian empire, last time we covered how Emperor Aurelian finally had the success other emperors had failed to have in bringing the empire back together. He was able to bring the Gallic Empire in the West back under Rome's control as well as bring down the Palmyrene Empire, making its territories part of the Roman Empire once again. For this Aurelian was given the title, "Restorer of the World" because that's still how Rome thought of itself. Last segment also covered how Aurelian used his power to promote the age old concept that the sun was the greatest god, and we discussed how that affected both Jews and Christians. However, Aurelian would meet his end by being an emperor who in many ways attempted to restore the integrity of the empire. This, of course, made enemies who eventually orchestrated his assassination. The next emperor, a man named Tacitus, would turn his attention back to fighting the barbarians. Tacitus would not last long before he died of fever and his brother Florianus would take the throne. However, a short time after that a Roman general in Egypt named Probus would lead a successful rebellion, and defeating Florianus in battle he would become the next emperor in late 276 A.D.

In spite of these quick changes in who was emperor, nothing really changed as Probus also had to focus on the barbarians. Thus, we truly ended our last segment talking about how Probus is looked at by history as the man who pushed back north into some of the territory Rome had long abandoned and even rebuilt some of the fortifications Emperor Hadrian had built between the Rhine and Danube Rivers over a century earlier. While this seemed to be Rome rising once again, when we look at how this was accomplished we find it was not as victorious as some would believe. By this time Rome was becoming greatly dependent on help from the barbarians to maintain the empire. Probus greatly accelerated the Romans becoming mixed with the barbarians by actually bringing the very barbarians Rome had been trying to drive out, into Roman territory to "settle" land there really were not enough Romans to settle. This was nothing more than the incorporation of an outside people into the empire, and so the war between the Romans and barbarians was fast becoming more of just a mutually beneficial exchange.

In many ways this kind of "diplomatic" handling of the situation is a much better way for things to happen. If man wants to be united under one centralized power as the Romans wanted, they should have welcomed in the barbarians from the start. After all, that's all the barbarians wanted in the first place; some land to farm and general resources to live a better life than they had in the harsh climate of the North. However, Rome was not going to do such a thing early on because Rome was for Romans. The

entire reason the barbarians were looked at as "barbarians" was because they lacked the culture the Romans thought was important. The barbarians were truly uncivilized! So what changed in these later times of Roman history? Well, to be blunt, Roman civility was not really successful in the long term. The Roman population was year by year being greatly diminished by war and sickness. This kind of internal decay is one of the greatest examples of how humans in the sinful state we live cannot live as one big world empire. The very idea of being one big world under a centralized power is that we can build a utopia! That was certainly what the Roman Empire was meant to be and it's why this line of empires we have been looking at, and which the Bible specifies are so very important to world history, are truly important human history!

As we have discussed, earlier empires were much more into the idea of making the people they took in people who adhered to the culture the empire represented. The first in this string of consecutive empires was the Assyrians and they were known to take people from one land and put them in another land, taking the people from that land to yet another place the Assyrians had taken over. This is one of the reasons why after the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, those who returned to Israel almost immediately faced people they were not familiar with from the past who didn't like the idea the Jews had returned. These are the people who did some digging and ended up sending letters to leaders in what was by then the Medes and Persian Empire to point out the people who had lived on this land decades prior, i.e. the Jews, had been a "troublesome people." They were pointing to the fact the Assyrians had never been able to take control of the southern part of Israel, which is how we ended up calling the people of God's chosen nation, "Jews." While the people of Israel in the North were carted off to other lands by the Assyrians, many of those who survived this displacement fled to the Southern Kingdom of Judea which remained. This made it appear that what was left of God's chosen nation were no longer Israelites as a whole but just "Jews."

All those historical details aside, the clear point in what Assyria was attempting to accomplish was to end cultural traditions of various people by mixing up the world's population. This, they hoped would serve to make the people of their empire all one people not just under the banner of the Assyrian Empire but truly people of the empire as if their individual cultures never existed in the first place. As the Babylonians came to power they took over a vast amount of territory already effected by these actions and it probably didn't seem as important to them to carry out further displacements. By the time the next empire's king/emperor (Medes and Persian Empire) chose to send Jews back to their homeland, other people already lived within the vicinity of the pile of rubble that was once Jerusalem. These people saw this as unfair and an encroachment on what they now saw as their territory. So much for displacement making for one happy family of people! That said, this is why the Jews lived in

very different circumstances than we see in the bulk of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) than they were by the opening of the Gospels and New Testament as a whole.

By the time of the Greeks we see a people who were winning over the world with their culture due to its general appeal. This seemed a much better thing overall than the work of displacing people as a way to dispose of more native cultures and replace them with one centralized culture, and it was. As we have discussed, it very nearly worked! However, the Tower of Babel Effect continued and while even the Romans couldn't help but take on a tremendous amount of the Greek's culture they still ended the Greek Empire so they could take charge of "the world." For as strong as the Romans were they were still far more diplomatic about their takeover of the world than their predecessors had been. Sure they fought great battles with the Greeks, but little by little the Romans took over by winning people to their side and expanding on the idea of democracy which the Greeks had made popular, or should we say famous, in the world. To be a Roman was something special and to be a Roman citizen came with privilege and prestige not being a citizen just didn't have. This brought many people to actively seek it out, and that's a fact not emphasized enough which is important to what the Bible is trying to show us about the attempts man has made and is making to be one big happy world controlled from one central and centralizing place/power!

By the time we have made it to in Roman history in this study we see an empire that lasted long enough to begin losing its luster, so to speak. The idea of being Roman was appealing in its day but as the greatness of Rome began to fade, even people within the empire didn't see it as such a big deal anymore. This is why we see Rome split into three different parts until a Roman emperor found enough power and the right circumstances to bring it back together. That seemed like a great accomplishment, but what is an empire without people? Nothing, and the people of the empire were the real issue. They were literally dying off. Medical technology couldn't keep up with the unhealthy way living in larger and larger unified conditions such as cities brought. The dream of utopia made Romans lazy, and after all where's the prestige in being Roman if you have to do manual labor like a commoner? These kinds of thoughts and problems are where the entire Tower of Babel idea really begins to fall apart. If the idea is that the world is a utopia for everyone, who's going to do the really dirty hard jobs? The only answer to this is that the world can't be a utopia for just everyone. There will always need to be those upon whose backs the labor must fall; a second class of citizens if you will. This is what was happening in Rome. The first idea was, we just need to keep the dirty barbarians out of our glorious empire. Then even the work to do that became so arduous they started hiring barbarians to do the work of keeping barbarians out of their glorious empire. That only lasted so long before those barbarians started demanding to climb the ladder to become part of the privileged and if you attempt to deny them they'll turn on you. Thus, barbarians were little by little allowed in as full Roman citizens.

As this happens, what is one to do but go out and get new barbarians to do the work the original barbarians did, and on we go until one day the path from barbarian to Roman becomes such a common thing Roman emperors are actively seeking to bring more barbarians in while at the same time fighting them

back. Pretty soon you're not so much driving barbarians back to gain territory for your citizens, you're driving into their territory and then asking the "defeated" to "settle" it as a way to filter in and supplement the sick and dying population of your empire! It's a kind of cumulative insanity humans take on as they attempt to kick against what God created us to be. Following the last great empire, the world was basically forced to go on attempting to fix these issues with the sense of having more defined nations and then we can toy with the ideas of unifying those nations into a greater whole. As I have touched on before, we've already seen success in this area through centralizing governing systems such as we see in the United States and the European Union, as well as the larger dream of the United Nations organization. Of course, I use the word "success" very loosely there as we have struggled to make these things work and be a positive instead of a negative thing in the world. Probably where man has accomplished the most in unifying the world is through the interconnection of monetary systems but again, is there positive effect in this for everyone in the world? That is the burning question!

This is why it is my hope that through this study the reader has really been able to absorb facts such as the one we ended with last time. Rome was not just at war with barbarians as in the outright fighting of pushing them back out of Roman territory; they were in a silent war of being replaced by the barbarians! I have said many times in this teaching that long before Rome fell and history records the "end" of the Roman Empire as coming about, Rome was fading and failing to be the power a true world empire should be. However, almost more important than that to our study of God's chosen nation is the fact the Romans, as in the people of Rome, were being replaced by barbarians. If you read through an overview of history and/or many history books, you can get the clear idea the barbarians from the North slowly ate away at the Roman Empire and distressed it until it was weakened to the point the barbarians were able to overrun it entirely, leading to the empire's collapse. What is not often seen but should be stressed more in historical studies of Rome's demise is the way Rome began to lean on the barbarians for assistance and this was not just the fact Rome "hired" barbarian troops to fight some of its battles, even against other barbarians! Rome literally took actions like those we touched on at the end of last segment where they used barbarians to supplement the literal population of the empire.

A lot of newer historical accounts will emphasize the idea the people of Rome had become entitled and lazy and there is no doubt this played a part on some levels as to why the barbarians were able to overrun the empire eventually. However, the bigger factor is that much of the original people we would generally describe as Roman died out due to many factors of negative living. The fact a large centralized power is not the wonderful thing for the individual that people often think it is has a lot to do with what we might today call "urban decay" in the interior of the empire. This kind of situation leads to diseases that in a day and age of very limited medical knowledge and an almost non-existent medical system can practically wipe out whole groups of people. We are familiar in history with that kind of thing happening in the Americas when diseases were brought over with explorers and in some cases used on purpose to infect Native American people. Having no immunity to so many of the diseases people such as Europeans commonly faced, native

people easily succumb to them. Whole tribes of native people simply disappeared. However, this is not a phenomena isolated to what happened to Native Americans when new groups of people made contact with them. This is a situation faced often in especially the ancient world and, in fact, is probably more to blame for major shifts in power and peoples than any of us know!

If you reach in past the bigger stories covered by history and take more of a look at the true human side of things, it's hard to say just how much of the Roman Empire by the time it "fell" was actually Roman at all! The slow loss of Roman population through not just sickness but also war and invasion from the outside led to a need for Rome to hire outside help to fight their battles. As this happened these soldiers and their families did not simply do their job and go "home." Many of them settled within the empire, literally becoming the population. In truth, the talk in history about how much Romans hired barbarians to fight their wars takes on a whole new perspective when one stops to think about this. This also relates to the subject I find important to this study and which I have touched on many times. After the barbarians stopped and looked around at what they had burned to the ground they realized what they dismantled wasn't half bad, but in thinking that, they were not considering what I'm trying to emphasize in this segment. At first the barbarians just saw Rome as standing in their way for obtaining new land and resources, and due to this they destroyed Rome before really seeing what it represented. That said, the barbarians fully took over a once great empire that consisted of many barbarians which had already lived among the Romans and in so many ways become the Romans!

This is an important thought when we look at the unfolding of history and specifically that of Europe. The infighting of nations that have from the start all been related people on so many levels has its foundations in this truth. By the time Rome as a recognized empire fell, a lot of one time barbarians were already at work building their own version of what Roman had been. In so doing they had also begun to change and greatly effect what Rome was on a day by day, year by year basis. In so many ways the infighting of those people who we look at as European through our modern historical eyes began while Rome was still an empire by historical standards! That is to point out, those barbarians who fought to end Rome were fighting very much so against people who were once barbarians by Rome's standards as much as they were fighting against, how shall I say it, "pure Romans." The real difference we are seeing as we study in more detail than we have any other transition from one world empire to another is, when it comes to the "fall" of Rome it's less of a fall and more a simple failure of the centralizing system. Thus, what we might say was more "original" Roman people might still have been at the head of the centralized power but taking them out was nothing more than a technicality in what had become little by little a barbarian takeover through population replacement. This shows us clearly how much the one world governing idea is in and of itself a failed idea!

Now, before anyone accuses me of something, let me take the opportunity to point out I don't see population replacement as something that needs to be guarded against. At times it's a good thing and at other times it's a bad thing but more times than not the determination as to which one it is, is based

purely on one's personal perspective. The reality is that we are all one wash of humanity. We all came from the same God created couple that had to be driven from the Tree of Life. (Gen. 3:22-24) As much as man populated on the earth from that beginning point, the who is who was narrowed down a second time by the flood that only Noah and his family lived through. Thus, we are all nothing more than the descendants of the diversity brought through that bottle neck which existed in Noah, his wife, and the three woman their sons married. Add to that the fact we have no clue how far or not far removed from Noah's family tree his wife was or the three women their sons married and one can see how closely related we all are no matter how diverse it seems we are as "different" people. It all goes to show how much diversity, or whatever you wish to call the element contained in Adam, that God packed in when He created that first man whom even the first woman was created as a female extension of.

These are the perspectives we need so desperately to understand what the Bible is telling us in full. More than we grasp even what we call diversity is more about the cultures we build than it is about who we are as individual humans! This is how something like the barbarians becoming Roman happens without leaving a tremendous mark history can point to. It was easy for the barbarians to intermingle their languages with those primarily spoken by the original inhabitants of various Roman territories. Language combination and drift is literally happening all the time! It was also easy for customs brought in by the barbarians to slowly be picked up and become routine for different more native Romans. At the same time, a lot of what the Romans would have called "refinements," which were part of what made Romans Romans and barbarians barbarians, were being learned and picked up by those who had come in from those harsher northern territories. As marriages took place between men and women on different sides of this cultural and genetic fence, more and more children were true descendants of both "worlds." This is why I ask you to look at the question of how much barbarians were fighting Romans by the end of all this. These facts explain how Europe arose from the ashes of the Roman Empire, not as one entity like we saw in the previous transitions of power but as multiple nations that understand such a connection with each other that they have constantly looked for a better way to be interconnected governmental wise than simply being neighbors. We should have a new perspective on the fact Europe has been in a centuries long battle to settle the issue of it being one centralized empire or just a group of independent states/nations but in truth, this process began before history says Rome ever "fell"!

All these thoughts have so much to do with what history calls the two World Wars which were eventually fought. Also why by the second of the two we see a specific effort to rid the continent and the world of the one people who were seen to stand in the way of world unification like we had before the confounding of our language. That, of course, is a reference to the Holocaust which while it's true that not all people who died in the Holocaust were Jews, the Holocaust was orchestrated, funded, and maybe more importantly, allowed to happen, as a way to wipe the Jews as a people from the face of the earth! The question is, why were the Jews singled out? The answer is, because the real thing standing in the way of man having one unified world is God and man knows this! God has shown us it's not the right way for us to live because it won't work without

Him. We as humans have demonstrated that it does not work but instead of admitting that, we look for someone to blame. Since we can't reach God Himself the world went after what was reachable - God's chosen nation!

When you look at the issues like population replacement, sickness, etc., we are talking about in this segment one has to ask, what people could expect to survive such a thing as the Holocaust? To begin with, how were the Jews able to survive as a recognizable nation of people under the circumstances they came to long, long before World War II? Entire cultures, and what we would call ethnic groups, have vanished for far less in far less time! Thus, in this study we seek to answer the question of are the Jews God's chosen nation and have spent, by this point, a great deal of pages answering it but the simple fact the Jews as a people survive as a recognized group of people through any of this history should be answer enough! The fact they were still such a people after centuries of living among the wash of cultures and peoples in Europe to the point someone like Hitler and his regime could even recognize them is evidence too large to deny unless you simply do it for the sake of doing it, which some people simply choose to do!

People think so called Bible prophecy is hard to understand but most of that talk in our time comes from a simple ignorance of history. At the time Revelation was given God had to use illustrative techniques to paint the picture. God wasn't going to change the facts of the path we would choose as humans by telling us what exactly happened and how but He would show us the important end results as they took place. Revelation, even at the time of its giving, was understandable in the fact Daniel's visions had been given centuries before. Daniel was a little dumbfounded by all he had seen but even he understood the idea the illustrations were talking about times changing as different people came to power all attempting the same thing at the core. Thus, Daniel longed to see the end of where it would all go but God told him to close up the book because the bulk of what Daniel had been shown needed to take place before the world would be ready to receive any more. (Dan. 12:1-4) With the exception of the more far reaching details that go out into our time, given near the end of what Daniel saw, the great bulk of the illustrations given to him were history by the time John was given what Daniel sought which we call Revelation.

This means the illustrations in Revelation should have been that much more understandable even at the time they were given than those given to Daniel were for him at the time. Far more people than just a man of tremendous God-given understanding could look at the illustrations in the Book of Daniel and see how they fit with the overall picture history showed them to be by the time of Revelation. This makes it much easier to read Revelation and even without knowing what all the details are pointing to one should get the picture of what the bigger illustrations are showing. Now, by our time very little of what Revelation shows is different than the Book of Daniel in that way. Most all we read is now history for us, making the book that much more understandable! I have always and often tried to explain, prophecy was/is not given so we will know what will happen as much as it's given so we will recognize the events as they happen. This dynamic is why the Jews, along with anyone

else who had the foresight to study the Law and Prophets they held, had everything they needed to recognize Jesus as The Messiah when He appeared as a man walking on this planet. If not during the life of Christ, certainly during and post the aftermath of His death, burial, and resurrection!

The fact The Messiah would come a second time is in the Hebrew Bible but it was not understood to the point what is promised about the Second Coming was mistaken by the Jews as being what The Messiah should bring at His first appearing. In truth, this fact was less of a mistake and more of an intentional thing on the part of the Jewish religious leaders. People have more than a tendency to read the Bible and get what they want out of it than understand what is actually there. The Jews illustrated for the world what a mistake this is! Doing this meant they were looking for a great Messiah Who would deliver Israel from its enemies and restore its independence to greatness the likes of which had not been seen since the days of Solomon. They came to believe this so much they totally ignored the parts that describe The Messiah as the humble man He would come to be; first and foremost the restorer of the nation in the things important to God such as righteousness. This would be offered by God because the chosen nation has a point and a purpose to demonstrate the righteousness God wants to bring to our lives. They also were/are to represent the ways in which man can live together in peace being the people God created us to be.

The Jews were looking more on fleshly things and the worldly glory of having an independent nation and this caused them to reject God's offer, leaving Jesus' sacrifice the last great sacrifice for the world to lean on in receiving what the Law was always meant to show through the Jews. This is why we use the terminology today that we are saved through Jesus' blood. We find the true ways of God's grace and the faith He offers us which can lead to our salvation through the example Jesus left us with and because all the detailed things in the Torah which show the very same thing can be read but they are no longer being physically illustrated. The Jews chose to look to God for fleshly rewards and this didn't bring the glory they sought but the total loss of the last chance they had at perpetually being a nation of people on the land God gave them as their home. As much as that was a great loss for the Jews, the untold loss to the world is unimaginable! God didn't want that to happen but if it did it couldn't be the end of His oracles on this earth being illustrated. Thus, God Himself had to set a longer lasting example by allowing Himself to be sacrificed for the world. Considering all of that we must ask ourselves, are we reading the Bible to see what's really there or are we simply seeking only what we'd like to be there?

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

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

FBS continued from pg. 4

way the world worked. We would have grown and learned, explored and faced challenges in an environment we can't even conceive of in full. This is how powerful God's voice is and it's why we should all seek to hear it. The problem on this side of having the knowledge God never wanted us to be responsible for is that our own knowledge gets in our way of hearing God. Our knowledge is what causes many people to believe they don't need to hear God's voice, and all this is why we will never know world peace until Jesus comes back to, once again, be our direct mediator in a way where, once again, God's voice will not take effort on our part to hear! When Jesus came the first time He offered such an opportunity but the world didn't want it. Thus, the second time Jesus comes to this earth He will come with the force that leaves men no choice but to live in a world where wrong and the punishment thereof is handled with perfect righteousness.

All that will come about, along with the eventual ending of this world and ultimate eternal separation of the right from the wrong because God has shown us there is no other way to have even what we claim we as humans want. This is why I say, God knew before He ever formed the chosen nation He would not get a group of people who would all do the right things because they listened to His voice. Thus, what God needed was to form a nation of people who would be compelled to do what He wanted them to do by the same mechanisms that drive a lot of people to do what they do. God would make the promised land home for the chosen nation; not just because God said so but because it's the land where their fathers died! The land their fathers slated them with one day possessing. Yes, it was actually God Who told them this is what would one day happen, but to many in the chosen nation the only thing that would resonate in their hearts would be that their forefathers had believed it. God would go on to make this true of the Law He would give them. It was not just the ways of righteousness and redemption both lived and prophesied in actions, it became the nation's culture. This has a lot to do with that larger subject which explains why God has not commanded all believers to live the Law, nor is it the literal way of salvation. The Law and the chosen nation act as a map that can lead us to the faith in God we need to one day be saved.

None of us can afford to believe our works will save us, even if those works are things we feel are ordered by God. All people throughout all time who will be saved in the end are saved because God's grace saw beyond our faults and saw our needs before we ever had those faults and needs. What God needs from us is that we seek to hear His voice and get better at hearing His voice as time goes forward. He wants to build a relationship with each of us which is personal and persistent and what God is looking for ultimately are those who want such a relationship to the point it's our hearts desire for our existence. That kind of faith is what justifies God sealing us with a seal that is eternal. A seal that says God has not violated our free will in taking us to a place where His voice will, once again, be always with us and where no unrighteousness will be allowed. The chosen nation was/is only a symbol of what God ultimately has planned and He would not force Israel to be a group of people who served Him. However, that kind of yielding of will is what

God's looking for in the individuals who will one day be welcomed into an eternal life of pure faith. Thus, the Law could never be salvation but it was designed to become a heritage for the chosen nation along with the land Isaac now lived on. This would give the chosen nation all the normal fleshly reasons to follow God's Laws and be the beacon of righteousness God wanted and wants to use them to be!

This is why in verse 5 God emphasizes to Isaac the reasons Abraham was able to start this entire process of beginning the chosen nation. We have emphasized the obey God's voice part of these reasons because it's the starting point for the rest of what God puts on this list. When one thinks of that they should see why I spend so much time talking about the fact faith is not blind belief. Anything that gets in our way of understanding the importance of seeking and learning to hear God's voice is an extremely bad thing! Many Christians will tell you something like a sinner's prayer is the first prayer God hears you say but if God was not already actively offering us faith, no one would pray any prayer. We as humans give ourselves way too much credit in thinking we control things and God has given us a lot of control over this universe and very specifically this planet. However, we could never reach God if He was not already reaching to us. We would never learn to hear His voice if He was not continually trying to get us to listen. The control we have in the here and now is mostly the fleshly things that get in our way when we attempt to hear God's voice but if we desire Him, God can cut through all of it. That's the control we have, the ability to get out of our own way so God meets with us in a closer and closer walk.

The other items on the list can only happen if we are willing and able to hear God's voice, but all are very important. As I mentioned last time, the part about Abraham keeping God's charge has to do with sticking with what we come to know. God is an incredible God of love and grace but He wants us to move forward in Him not just stagnate. This point might be about the best description for what started me down the path of understanding how off the Christian religion was from the reality of what it is to serve God. It seemed so much of what I saw as the problem was how stuck people were in the ways they had become comfortable with to the point that instead of it being the thing that kept them serving God it was the things that hindered, if not stopped them completely. It became very clear to me that the people within the church would sometimes come to realizations about ways God wanted them to live but if those things did not line up with what the church did as a regular practice, what God had told them almost always took a back seat to the status quo. It's what people want for the most part for reasons we have spent a lot of time covering, and one of the biggest reasons it's what people want is because it's what keeps us together in groups. That's why I stress that subject so much!

One of the reasons Abraham was able to keep God's charge is because when it was necessary to break from people who were not a part of what God planned for his life, he was willing to do that. Even if these people were family Abraham put God first. Year after year Abraham lived his life being a stranger in a strange land. This is not something we dwell on as it just seems to be a fact of the story we read in the Bible but, again, we must put ourselves in his shoes to have any

understanding. Year after year went by and yes many things happened to Abraham but most of his life in the time frame we read about was simply being that guy who lived in a land of people he had no connection to. On top of that, he was to avoid making too much of a connection with these people because that would negate the point of God bringing Abraham out of his original homeland. As we talk about he and Isaac doing such a thing was so future generations of the chosen nation would clearly feel Canaan was their homeland, it almost feels like a contradiction. That's why it's important to understand God was building a chosen nation not all the people of whom would need to be this dedicated to God in order to make it work. As I mentioned earlier, God already knew there would be no particular nation that would serve Him in the ways He wanted them to. This is why being part of a particular nation or group cannot save you. The only way for God to have a group of any size, especially approaching something reasonably called a nation, was/is to gather all the individuals from where ever they might be both around the world and through time who were such a people!

As we walk in this one foot in front of the other way we do now, none of us know how many such people we share this world with. This is why I often bring up Noah and what he went through. That story shows that the collection of people really listening to God was a nation of eight people at best and even that more than likely includes people who were going along with their family more so than being people who truly listened to God. We don't know how many or how few really are people of God today, but just as the chosen nation was made up of people who remained a part of what God was building simply because it was their heritage, the number of true believers isn't as big as everyone who claims to be a person of faith. Of course, it's not for us to judge who is and who isn't for so many reasons that would be a whole other conversation, but as God talked to Isaac He made it clear Abraham had not done what he did because it was where circumstances of his life had led him. I'm sure Isaac was pretty clear on that fact but it was very comforting to hear God confirm his father's actions were what God wanted. This means even if Isaac found his entire life living in much the way his father had lived, it wasn't because being in Canaan was simply where the family had gotten stalled in some way.

It was important Isaac stay the course because he and his father's life needed to do what they were doing, no matter what the cost, or the chosen nation would have no chance. God had and was asking that Isaac do this just because God said so, so future generations of the nation might do it because he had. This is the complexity of God's plan that very few people get to be a part of, especially at this level. As we have discussed, most people just don't prioritize what God has asked of them just because they know God asked it of them. We might for a time but when it becomes more inconvenient or if it already feels it has been, we won't keep the charge of God. This is what makes the comfort of religion such a danger and it's ridiculous that so many who claim to serve God think it's the right and only way to serve. In some ways it's almost as if we have picked up more so on the parts God designed the chosen nation to have so

people would see it as their heritage and all but forgotten the truth the Law is attempting to teach. In fact, this is exactly what Jesus was talking about when He told the religious leaders that they had omitted the more vital parts of the Law while scrutinizing exactly how to get other parts perfect. (Matt. 23:23)

Because we so easily relate to it, it's easy to look at the Law and believe serving God requires following all the eating habits and other such things in the Law even if you're not part of the chosen nation. How to pay tithes is something the Jews scrutinize to death for the same reason. We want the part we can get our physical hands on and literally do something to feel we are serving God. We want a church service we can go to and feel we've fulfilled our obligation, commitment, or whatever we find comfort in. What people do not want is to put in the real work of laying aside the physical distractions and truly learning the ways of righteousness so we can hear God's voice clearer and clearer. God wanted to remind Isaac that hearing what God wanted was important but sticking with what God had commanded was just as vital once he understood it. That's what Abraham had done and that's how God's plan to build a chosen nation had gotten this far. Now it was Isaac's turn to keep God's charge in order to see it brought to the next phase of the plan.

This is where we need to understand the next items on the list of verse 5 are not simply ways to emphasize the point before. The next item God tells Isaac his father had gotten this far by doing was that Abraham kept God's commandments. At first glance, and maybe at second and third glance, the difference between keeping God's charge and keeping His commandments can seem razor thin at best. However, what I think might help us the most to see how this is yet another step in the important items Abraham did is to point out what we've been talking about once again. God was going to put in place things that Abraham and Isaac would have known are not necessary for salvation, but only things God wanted the chosen nation to do to demonstrate what it means to strive to be clean in this world and in our existence! The only reason one can argue staying in Canaan was "necessary" for Isaac's salvation is that God had asked it of him. That said, we should all understand there was nothing magical about living in Canaan when it comes to salvation overall.

This is what following God's commandments is talking about. There are any number of things God might ask of us in our lives that we need to understand aren't vital things we need to teach other people so they too might be saved in the end. However, God wants them of us because they build a part of His plan we may or may not understand at the moment. These are things God wants because He can use your life to testify something to others they wouldn't otherwise grasp. If we want to be fully used of God we must get the point that following God's commandments is not exclusive to being part of the chosen nation; it's a part of every believer's very personal faith!

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

he so chose. Ruth's actions would give Boaz the ability to wake up and find her there, understanding all the meaning of her presenting herself as she did and take the next steps to marry her. It would also give him the ability to wake up and finding her at his feet accept her offer to be his full servant and simply take her into his house as such. It also gave him the opportunity to find her there and tell her to get back to Naomi because that was where she belonged. At this point all those possibilities were open and which one Boaz would take was unknown but again, they were open. That's the important part! So, of course, Ruth would agree to do exactly as Naomi had instructed her without question. There is probably little doubt Ruth understood the meaning of what Naomi was telling her to do and the other factor in it all is that Ruth had nothing to lose by doing it.

If Boaz woke up and told her to return to Naomi it surely would not be done with anger. It would simply be the way he felt best and she would gladly live with Naomi as she had planned. If he took her in as a full servant there was that much more possibility Naomi would come under Boaz's direct care as well. At the very least, Ruth would still be allowed to take care of her mother-in-law considering what a kind and generous man Boaz was. At the very best end of the possibilities, Ruth becomes Boaz's wife and the ending of that would surely be as good or better than any of the fairy tale stories we as humans like to tell! Thus, Ruth would clean herself up and get down to the threshing floor that evening. She would do as Naomi said and conceal her presence while Boaz finished his evening and she would watch closely to see that he went to lay down right at the end of the huge pile of grain. It seems clear Boaz fell asleep hard considering all the work he and his servants had done to build up that pile of grain and Ruth would quietly go in and lay herself down at his feet.

Nothing about her doing this disturbed Boaz as he slept soundly until around midnight. At that point something startled him awake and I'm sure it didn't take much after he had a few hours of sleep. After all, they were here to guard the grain as much as anything. No matter what it was that specifically woke Boaz he was certainly startled to find what he would never have expected to find. We are not totally clear on the kind of servants Boaz had but even if they were totally bound to him, he obviously did not expect one of them to sleep at his feet. At least not in these circumstances and certainly not one of the females! Nonetheless, that's what he found as he woke up. He didn't know who she was at first, only that she was there and he didn't have a clue why. Thus, he asks the logical question of who she was. Ruth was awake and ready to answer him for she quickly responds and even adds the fact she wanted him to spread his skirt over her because he was her near kinsmen. After what we covered above this might seem like a contradiction but one needs to understand exactly what Ruth was saying. At first it might seem she's telling him what to do or what he should do but what she was actually doing was echoing what he had already told her to take to heart that first day they met out in the field.

Ruth's words were nothing more than an offer as a woman of his family to do with her as he saw fit and Boaz totally understood this. Boaz's response is, again, nothing short of beautiful! You can just see him shaking his head in amazement at the incredibly virtuous character of Ruth as he blesses her with

the love of The Lord and goes on to tell her what amazes him the most about her. Just for emphases again, Ruth was a Moabite woman by birth. All things considered, Boaz had no real obligation to take her and raise up children in the family's name. However, Ruth also had absolutely no obligation to follow the Law God gave to Israel concerning such matters! I think there can be little doubt Ruth must have been an attractive woman and whether any of us would judge her as such or not doesn't matter at all because Boaz found her attractive. We don't know how much of it was the beauty that is skin deep but we certainly know the beauty that really counts was there. Boaz acknowledges this as he points out she could have had any man she wanted but no matter if wealth or looks or attitude might have been most important to her in finding one, what she had chosen was to offer herself to be the kind of woman God was looking for in willingness to serve Him and His plan!

With that, Boaz gives her the most comforting and highest praise he had given her yet. He tells her not to worry, he would move forward with exactly what the Law of God asked him to do without hesitation because she had shown herself to be such an amazing woman in Israel that all the city of Bethlehem knew she was a woman whose price is beyond all other great riches we can have in this life. Ruth was a virtuous woman! (Prov. 31:10-31) Then in words that might have made Ruth pause for just a minute, Boaz is forced to inform her that while it was true he was very near family to her husband, there was one other man in the line of succession who was closer; meaning he held the right to take her and raise up children in Israel for the family. Ruth may or may not have known this man Boaz spoke of but we know her determination to follow the Law of God. Therefore it's hard to believe this set her mind or heart back in any way.

We might think of all this in very romantic terms and I don't want to squash that in the least because it's about the most romantic story I've ever heard. However, God was first in Ruth's desires and the same can be said of Boaz. As hard as it might have been for Ruth to think Boaz might not be the man to marry her, I think Boaz's words make it clear he'd be pretty heartbroken too if this didn't work out for them. However, they would follow the Law. What an amazing couple these two people were! No wonder God would put them in the direct bloodline of The Messiah. No matter what people they came from, their hearts belonged to God and I can't stress enough how special that was! Boaz tells Ruth that no matter if it is this other family member or himself, Ruth was going to be taken care of just as any woman in Israel should have been taken care of according to the Law. She was to simply lay back down and they would wait until the morning to find out.

We don't know exactly how much sleep Ruth got that night but we are told she was awake before it was light enough out anyone could see each other well. Boaz told her it was best no one know a woman had come into the threshing floor that night. This was honorable and wise as it preserved Ruth's standing as a virtuous woman and both their reputations within the community and household if marriage to each other wasn't in their future. However, before he would let Ruth go, Boaz told her to hold out the veil she had worn and he gave her six measures of the barley which was likely as much as she could carry. He knew very good and well Naomi knew where Ruth had

been that night and he didn't want Ruth returning empty handed. This was Boaz being generous as he had already shown himself to be, but it was also a way of making it clear that the fact Ruth was returning so early in the morning had nothing to do with Boaz kicking her out. He knew she'd tell Naomi what he had told her and he wanted to leave no doubt in Naomi's mind that his words might have been a way to get her to leave. This would be emphasized by the further fact Naomi would be aware Ruth could not have worked through the night to glean and prepare such an amount of grain so it must have been a gift. This is not to say he thought Naomi would doubt Ruth's word on the matter but there was also the tradition of the man giving his future wife's parents gifts as a thank you for allowing him to marry their daughter.

In this case that would not so much apply because Boaz had not courted or pursued her as we might say. Ruth was offering herself as the once wife of Boaz's near family which required no such gift. However, Boaz wanted to give a gift to what was left of the family and the haste of the moment required giving her the grain which was what was at hand. It was also very useful and in a way poetic in the aspect gathering food so they could eat is the entire reason Ruth came to Boaz's field where they had met for the first time. So with her grain, off Ruth went in those last moments before daybreak to return to Naomi. It was so early that even Naomi did not know it was Ruth who had come in. Again, she also would not have expected Ruth to return if the plan had "worked," at least not so early in the morning. Ruth would explain how the entire night had unfolded and what Boaz had told her he would do. She specifically points out that the grain she brought back was a gift Boaz had sent directly to Naomi. With the wisdom of a good mother Naomi clearly received Boaz's message and instructs Ruth to simply calm herself and wait without concern. She was convinced Boaz would not rest until he had settled the matter and knew whether or not the other family member would take Ruth or if it would be Boaz.

When we think of Naomi's words about Boaz not resting until he had settled the matter we should remember this was in the midst of the harvest season. The whole reason Boaz was at the threshing floor and accessible for Ruth to do what she had done was because he and his men were working so hard bringing in, preparing, and guarding the the grains from the fields that they were not going back to their homes. This was a work, eat, sleep cycle until it was done, so it was pretty special that Boaz would leave the work and take the time to settle this so quickly. Since no one outside their small circle was aware Ruth had even been there that night, it would have been easy for Boaz to simply tell Ruth to wait until after the harvest was through or at least until there was a sufficient break in the work. The entire thing had lingered this long without anyone caring to act, what harm would waiting a few more days or even a month or so do? In any case, that did not happen. Boaz went into the city to sit at the gate where such business was normally conducted in those days and waited for the man he was looking for to come by.

Showing one of the reasons the gate was a place to do

such business, the relative Boaz was waiting for did, in fact, come by and Boaz would call for him to come sit by him. To all the elders who also gathered at the gate this was a universal sign Boaz had business of importance to take up with this man. We are not told the man's name and that's likely because who he was is not of importance to the story; only that he was the family member first up in the line of those who should take Ruth to raise up children in her late husband's name. What we are told is that Boaz did not leave it to chance that the elders were listening to his words. Boaz specifically gathers ten elders to come and sit directly with them as he spoke what he had to say. Boaz does not go directly to the idea of Ruth but instead wisely begins with the piece of tradition that held greater monetary value. Boaz brings up the fact the land Naomi's husband Elimelech owned was not something Naomi was able to care for and due to that she would need to sell it. One might ask, where in the world did Boaz come up with this idea? The answer all lays in the Law and the traditions it spurred in the nation.

Yes, there was the obligation to raise up children in the name of the deceased so that a family not perish from among Israel, but in taking the man's widow you were also taking possession of his land. (Deut. 25:5-10) This was done because the land was directly an inheritance of the people of the chosen nation. In short, the Law God gave to Israel requires the people to do all they can to not only keep the land in the right family as an inheritance but most importantly, land was not to end up in the hands of those not of the chosen nation! It's an interesting subject that today comes up when talking about one way to basically take over another country; just buy up all their land! If such a thing ever happened to any specific country in history I am not aware of it, but in unofficial ways we see this happen many times. The simple migration of one group into an area populated by another group can often push the original group out. This can happen because there is literally no space left for the original group. The original group might become servants to the new or get so lost in the midst of the new group they are no longer recognized as a specific people.

No matter if it was done officially or unofficially, intentionally as a way to displace or unintentionally, God wanted Israel to be sure they did not slowly lose the promised land to outside people. This brings us to another one of those places which show us something God commanded Israel which would not apply to believers outside the chosen nation. It should go without saying and most everyone would accept that living on and/or owning a part of the promised land is not required for salvation. However, it is clearly in the Law God gave to Israel that they possess the land and do their utmost to hold onto it. The Law was/is about exemplifying righteousness but its requirements are not things God intended all believers (whether before or after the coming of Christ) to adhere to in order to be saved. Boaz was a man of the nation and that's why what we see in this story is Boaz caring about all the Law of God in preserving the chosen nation God blessed this world with!

Let's stay in God's Word!