

Free - Take One



Shaqah

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*“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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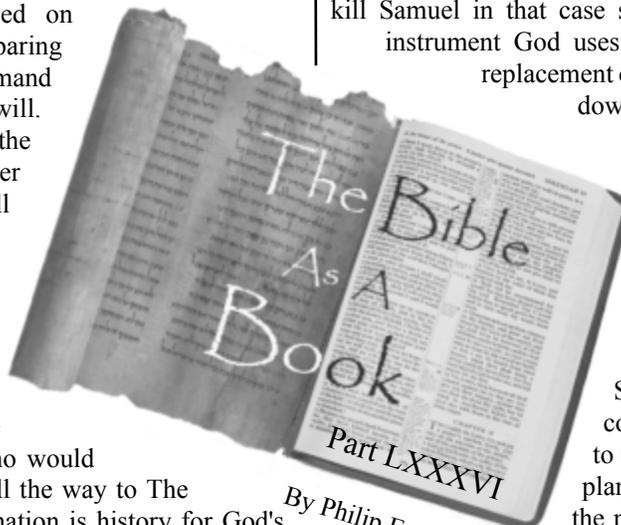
In our last segment we made the transition from wrapping up our look at the Book of Judges to beginning our look at the Book of Ruth. As I said in that segment, I Samuel is the next book chronologically but the Book of Ruth takes place during the time the Book of Judges covers. Thus, just as it is in the Bible we will continue the order of books we cover by going into Ruth. In starting that book, we talked last time about the questions we have been covering concerning each book and the obvious one for Ruth is the question of how much time is there, if any, between the last book and the next one. As just mentioned, Ruth is an overlap book and we about how its existence is based on showing us God was already preparing for the fact man would demand something other than His perfect will. That something would be that the nation have an earthly king as other nations have a king. This full transition from the judges to the nation having a king takes place in the books of I Samuel and II Samuel. However, God was not just preparing during the time of the judges to give Israel its first king as they would demand, but He was preparing the second king who would go on to have his line preserved all the way to The Messiah. Of course, all this information is history for God's chosen nation and that's the other question we briefly discussed last time. Ruth is a pure history book and a great example of why we consider all 12 of the books following the Torah to be the books of history. Now, the last question we answered last time concerns the naming of the book and that one is a bit obvious, but as we discussed, the reason we find a book of the Bible named for a Moabite woman is beautiful and a great symbol of the fact it's always been in God's plan to save not just His chosen nation but the world!

All that brings us to the next question in the set of questions we want to answer concerning each book, and that's the question of who wrote the book, along with how was it written? Unfortunately the answer to who wrote the Book of Ruth is not one we have any assurance of. There is speculation

that the book was written by the last judge, that being Samuel, who anointed David to be king when David was just a young shepherd boy. This is one of those things that is believed by some because it's a plausible thought based on the fact, while Saul was still king Samuel was ordered by God to go anoint David the next king in Israel. (I Sam. 16:1-13) Samuel was in fact fearful of Saul in doing this, but he obeyed God's command it be done nonetheless. In human thinking Samuel had painted a target on his back as well as that of David and his family. Surely Saul would seek to kill this future king of Israel in the hopes he could preserve his dynasty. Saul would also want to kill Samuel in that case so Samuel is not then used as the instrument God uses to go out and anoint yet another replacement of Saul. When one looks at this so far

down the time line as we now stand it might be easy to say all that would be foolish because it was not God's will for Saul's son to become the next king. Thus, killing who God chose would only worsen the situation. However, that's easier said than done. Being the one in the situation, Saul surely would have been compelled by emotions to at least try to thwart God's plan. Of course, such a plan would need to include disposing of the person anointed to be the next king, why kill Samuel? If you're thinking that just choose another man to anoint the next king or call that king in a totally different way you could have a point.

However, Samuel was a powerful man who was greatly revered by the nation! This is true even to the point Saul attempts to use a sorcerer to contact Samuel after Samuel had died. (I Sam. 28:7-14) If any other prophet that might have existed in the nation had been sent by God to anoint another man, the weight such appointment would carry among the nation would be weak at best. This is why you'd want to kill Samuel along with David. It was a game of politics which Saul might have thought he'd be able to win. In the end result, we see Saul did not attempt to kill either David or Samuel at that time.



By Philip E. Busby

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That said, it was still true that in the eyes of human thinking the risk always remained as long as Saul was alive. What we find from the history is the fact Saul did later fight a significant “war” with David in which he desired to see David killed. The reason this war did not cause more bloodshed than it did has to do with the fact David did not desire to kill Saul. Every time David got the chance to kill Saul he turned away and declared he would not touch God's anointed! (I Sam. 24:1-7) Thus, Saul would not be removed from office by David but by the Philistines to whom he lost a significant battle. His son Jonathan, who was good friends with David and already fully accepted David would be king once Saul was gone, was also killed along with his brothers in this battle. (I Sam. 23:16-18, 31:1-6) In a way, David would step in to fill a vacuum of power left by this event and become the king God wanted him to be!

Now getting back to the point that took us down that road, at the time Samuel anointed David king it might have seemed prudent to Samuel that he backup his actions by doing the work of a scribe. When we look at books such as Chronicles we find that scribes are the reason we have such books. It was very common in most nations that the acts of kings be recorded or chronicled for future reference. In doing so future kings could look back and see what decisions were made or how a similar situation to what he was facing had been handled in the past. One of the greatest reasons to keep such records was to trace how the man who was on the throne at any given time actually got there. It was not totally uncommon for people to bring a later challenge to a sitting king, and it is often done by bringing in someone of the family he took the throne from or another son of the previous king who believed he had more of a claim to the throne than the man who sat there at the time. On a larger scale there could be the truth a dynasty the nation wished to follow and have as their kings had been displaced. If enough time passed, which in some cases could be generations, those who displaced the original dynasty may at some time have been displaced themselves by someone or some group. The question of who is the rightful king of a particular nation can at times become very blurred. If and when a person from the family considered the original dynasty or more importantly, the rightful dynasty, comes upon the scene, it is very helpful if records exist that can trace back to his or her family and see that family is the rightful rulers of the nation. Such truths are why new dynasties have often attempted to destroy these records of the past.

For these and so many other reasons, records of the kings and their actions can be useful. Of course, today we see the greatest value of such records in the historical information they have preserved in spite of the fact who was king and when no longer has any importance as to who rules any nation now. The point is, these records for many reasons were kept at the time because they were important to the time, and in some cases, not the least of which are those in the Bible, such records have been preserved because of their importance to us now. This is what makes it a good argument that Samuel, after having anointed David the next king, did the work of a scribe and began to chronicle David's family tree. Beyond the direct protection of God there was the truth, not many people were aware David had been anointed king at such a young age. The main people who did know it were David and his family who

had little to no real political influence in the beginning of it all and, of course, Samuel himself. Samuel likely saw a day coming when he would have to stand up with David and make the case to the nation as to why David should be accepted king. This was a real possibility whether David became king before or after Saul's death. Even with both Saul and his son Jonathan dead, there would be some challenge to David taking the throne. Can you just imagine what might have been the case if God had desired Saul be removed and David installed at some point prior to Saul's death. Sure, God would have taken care of it in the end, but as humans we still feel the need to be sure we are ahead of the game should the need arise. That might have been Samuel's thinking in collecting such information.

No matter the truth, that is the basis for guessing Samuel may have written the Book of Ruth. He would have anointed David and then began the work of chronicling where David came from. This would possibly have application in fighting the political fight of putting David on the throne, and even if Samuel believed God would simply put David there with ease, the need for historical background of this new king would be something people would desire be on the records. At the time of these events Samuel was the closest thing to an authority outside of Saul's administration. The job would clearly fall to him if it was going to be done. Saying all that might make it sound like we can be all but certain Samuel wrote the book, but its still all speculation. There is no signature in the book; meaning there is no place we find a verse where the writer declares who he is and maybe why he thought it was important to write this down. There is no tradition we can point to that declares a writer of this book. Beyond that, there are other good speculations as to who might have written it though most of them would not have the dramatic flare we just covered as to why Samuel might have done it. The simple matter of the fact is that one of the later more official government scribes might have collected the information and written it for the sake of posterity. If that was the case, it was written as a separate work from those parts of the official chronicle of the kings because it is historical background of a king the events of which all took place before David was born, much less the king of Israel.

When looking at such facts there is also the point that no matter who is responsible for creating this book, they did so by collecting facts that were not likely written down anywhere as a whole or in part before the author of Ruth put the writing instrument to the scroll. Whether it was Samuel or someone else at the same or later time, the book was assembled by gathering the facts. This doesn't mean its story is in any way to be considered unreliable. While some will look at historical records from more ancient times and dismiss them because they were not “written down” until much later in the timeline of human history, we should keep in mind that the people who lived in times before so much history was or even could be written, were very used to keeping facts by memory. One of the very most important facts we are told in the Book of Ruth is that she was eventually married to Boaz. This is what makes her part of the family line of David, and in so being - The Messiah! This marriage, as well as the reason she was married to Boaz as opposed to another man in the family, was specifically witnessed at the gate of the city where it took place. This was so those elders who were there for the very reason of remembering

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we covered the fact Rebekah was troubled over the truth the children in her womb seem to be in conflict. This led her to seek The Lord on the issue and find out how it could be God's will that she finally have children only to have turmoil between them. We discussed how God was using the children in Rebekah's womb to represent the fact we see over and over again in God's Word. That's the fact there will always be two camps of people in this world. One camp will always seek to live their lives with no concern for the things of God or knowing Him. The other camp will seek God and desire to walk with Him in faith. God didn't force the two children in Rebekah's womb to be like they were. That part was just a truth of who they were and God used it to show this representation in the formation of the nation of Israel who would go forward in this world to be the people who represent the camp that chooses God while living in a larger world that for the most part does not. Such things should make it clear to us that the Law and all it was meant to show us was not about telling every person who desired the ways of God that salvation is or ever was obtained by becoming a part of the chosen nation. Instead it was, and always has been, about getting us to see we have a choice in this world and like we talked about last time, it never matters how big or small the camp that follows God is, it's available and that's what's important. Thus, God tells Rebekah the children in her womb were two manners of people and two nations. This led us to talk about how much the conflict between the two camps is not there due to hate on the part of those who serve God toward those who do not, but because the two camps have chosen such different directions in life they have trouble coexisting, especially in such close proximity to each other. Discussing all that brought us through Genesis chapter 25 verse 23, and we are ready to begin in verse 24 this time.

Verse 24 tells us the time had come for Rebekah to give birth and just like God had told her, she would give birth to twins. The next verse tells us the first child came out red and like a hairy garment. This reference is likely used because it was common to use the skins of cattle and goats to create clothing in those days and that culture. This would make garments something thought of as having hair on them as opposed to the cloth garments we are so familiar with today, or even the garments made in a place such as Egypt in those days where they used flax to weave cloth. The more herdsman culture that existed in Canaan would be using skins and for the purposes of warmth have no reason to attempt to remove the hair on the outside. This first child would come out of the womb so unlike a normal baby, who are usually smooth often not even having much hair on their head, it would bring to mind the idea he was already wearing clothes. On top of that he was apparently a child with very red hair, and considering that likely meant he had fairer skin, it would not be so strange for his skin to add to the redness when just coming out of the womb. These facts would be used to give the child a name, and that name would be Esau. Esau is a name that has some disputed meaning. Some

sources believe it means "covered with hair." Others believe it means something in the way of "one who does," as in, takes action. The hair idea is the more likely meaning according to what we are told in this verse, and the color red is indicated in the later designation of "Edom," which likely refers both to the name Esau and the reddish color of the food he wanted. In any case it serves to remember that people came up with names in those days on the basis words could be formed that had certain meanings; they didn't just have to borrow words already holding the meaning.

The second child would also be a son, but he would come out grasping onto the heel of Esau. This shows us these two children's conflict had not been settled but continued right up and through their birth. They had literally struggled for who would leave the womb first. When many people today talk about children before they are born being nothing more than a clump of cells or somehow less than human because they have not yet taken a breath of air into their own lungs, they should be reminded of this story. I understand people who are not familiar with the stories of the Bible will not know this story, but those who are should not take the story of these twins as metaphorical or anything like a legend told for the sake of conveying a moral point. The Bible's stories are not there to serve as some culture's fairy tales or whatever name you'd like to describe such a thing as. These stories are preserved history which God wants us to have so we can see the truth of life beyond man's fanciful tales which are driven by what men of the time want. In our day, many people who claim to believe the Bible also believe the ideas handed out to justify abortion, but the Bible clearly shows us people are people even inside their mother's womb. These two sons of Isaac and Rebekah had a real struggle with one another, even to the point of who would be the "first born." You can pass that off as nothing with the idea that babies in the womb couldn't possibly know what it meant to society to be the first born son, but that's missing the point. It's not that a child needs to understand what it means to be considered "the first," it's that society considers it important to be first because it's something so rooted in our base nature.

Anyone who has spend time with children is all too familiar with the argument that comes up about being first. Especially with the competitive nature most boys have, there is always the race to be first to the car, out of the car, to the door, out the door, etc. They can make a race out of anything, but it's not just that. Children often argue over who should be the first to do something, get something or any number of ways to be first! Thus, we see this in adulthood. It has long seemed to make sense in the minds of men that the only fair thing to do when choosing who should inherit leadership, whether that be of a nation such as a king or just of the family, is to give it to the first born. The higher reasoning explanation for why we make that choice comes from the same basic instinct we have as children. Maybe all these two struggling children understood was the

movement they were experiencing as they left the womb. Esau might have specifically struggled to be the first one born or he simply may have been in the position to leave the womb first, but no matter which is correct, Jacob wasn't about to let his brother get away that easily. He may have been behind in that particular race but he was going to be no further behind than right on his brother's heel.

The other facts verse 26 give us is that this second child would be named Jacob, and we are given the age Isaac was when his sons were born. Jacob would be given his name based on the idea he had a hold of his brother's heel when they were born. The name means "heel catcher," which in some references you'll see this as relating to the idea he was a "supplanter." However, it's my belief that's a contrived meaning based on faulty teaching which we'll get to. When it comes to Isaac's age, we are told he was 60 years old when the twins were born and just a few verses earlier we were reminded that Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. This means Isaac and Rebekah had waited 20 years to have children. While this is no where near as long as Abraham and Sarah had waited, 20 years is still a long time for a couple who wants children. In the case of Isaac and Rebekah, they, like Abraham and Sarah, had trouble believing it was possible for the plan of God for their lives to go forward without them having children. I'm sure in the end result it was very interesting for Abraham to look back and think about how he and Sarah thought they'd have many children, but in the end it was only God's will they have one. Of course, Abraham had a son with Hagar but it's made very clear he was not part of the promise God made that Abraham would be the father of the chosen nation. Ishmael, as well as the six sons of Keturah, would be a part of Abraham being the father of many nations but only Isaac would go on to fulfill the chosen nation part of the promise. Because his parents experienced this, Isaac may not have thought he would have several children, but there had to be the thought that to become a nation meant something like that needed to happen somewhere along the line.

No matter what Isaac and Rebekah thought would or should happen, it's totally understandable that after almost 20 years it was time to really seek God as to why they had not had children up to that point. This was not the insistence that they have children but the simple assurance there wasn't something they were doing or not doing that stood in the way of it happening for them. With as much as Isaac had learned from his parent's experiences he knew not to do something without God telling them to do it but that made for all the more reason to seek God for answers. Maybe he and Rebekah were living their lives focused on the wrong things, thinking they'd have many children. If that was the case then they needed to find out from God what their true course should be. That part of the entire story is so meaningful I can't emphasize it enough. What to some might seem to be impatience is in reality more patient than most any of us ever would be. Isaac and Rebekah were opening themselves to the will of The Lord and allowing Him to take them wherever He wanted. Since God respects our free will it's very important we do this. This dynamic is why when teaching the disciples to pray, Jesus said we should ask for the will of God to be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Luke 11:1-4) God waits on us to ask for His will to be done. God has an

overall plan that is based on the fact the larger camp in this world will always be the people who do not want to serve Him, but that plan is more a plan of obligation that rests on the fact God, as the only truly righteous being, must judge our sin and He will but He would much rather we confess our sins so He can forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9)

The bottom line is that it's God's desire to do so much more in this world but He will hold back and wait for us to open the opportunity. This is why it's important we pray God's will be done on this earth with the same freedom it has in heaven. The more we pray that in earnest, and the more of us in this world pray that, the more God is free to do work on/in this world. This leads us again to turn our backs on the prosperity teaching of the Christian religion because at the heart of the prosperity teaching is the selfishness of getting and having what we want. This is not what God taught us to pray because desiring what we want in this world is something God giving us a free will allowed us to do already. We were free to disobey God and take from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and we did. When we turn from God and go out into this world doing our own thing we have the opportunity to obtain any number of things we want. Whether we do or do not obtain them is not the point. The world is here before us in this physical existence and man has made this world what he wants. It's so often not fair to some as it seems to refuse to give them anything while at the same time giving so much to others, but none of that is what God wanted. Again, it's the world we built making choices about how to run it without God's input. If going after the things of this life is what we desire then we can do that, but asking God to grant it to us makes no sense.

That's why we must ask for God's will to be done instead. He and only He knows what we have need of even before we do! (Matt. 6:7-8) He's the only One Who can take us out of the mess we make for ourselves as humans and set us on the right track, giving us what we truly need in this life. Because He is always focused on the ultimate goal of taking us from this world of sin completely in the end so we may be in a place where His will is truly what there is, we must remember His answer to our prayers to have His will won't often give us what we think we want or at times even need. He knows what we can handle so we do not stray off the path and miss out on salvation. He also knows what He wants to do in using our lives to reach others. It's not always a comfortable path for the flesh, but keep in mind, the flesh is the part that will one day die and return to the dust this earth is made out of. That means it cannot truly know or desire the ways of righteousness. We need to enslave the flesh to the spirit and its desires because our spirit is eternal and capable of desiring the ways of God. These are the kind of larger lessons the stories such as the one we are covering here teach us. Isaac and Rebekah didn't know for sure what God's plan was, but they knew seeking Him and allowing His will to play out in their lives was the right thing to focus on. They didn't know why the children God finally allowed them to have were in such conflict with one another, but they knew seeking God and most importantly, accepting God's answer on the matter was what they needed to do!

So Rebekah more than anyone else knew these

What About God's Chosen People?

Part LX

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

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

In our last segment we took another detour off into talking about how all this history we are covering is not just human history but a way to see the Bible is true. The beasts in the books of Daniel and Revelation lay out for us a timeline of men attempting over and over to rebuild what they lost at the Tower of Babel. This happened over and over, not so much because men tried and failed each time but because of what the Tower of Babel effect was intended to do. Now, we have come to the interesting junction of looking at a Roman Empire which was crumbling and having trouble holding things together in spite of no other major power coming to crush it. Instead, it would be the steady work of the Barbarians primarily to the north who didn't even do what they did for the sake of becoming the next empire. Their motives were totally different and oblivious to how hard a great amount of the world had worked to have and by this time prop up the centralizing effect the Romans still represented. We ended last segment talking about how in spite of the emperor being killed by these barbarians, there was no big push for a new man to take power as there had been in the past. Instead, there was left in Rome the youngest son of the last emperor whose name was Hostilian. He would assume power but there would also be an army general named Gallus whom the army had named the next emperor.

Neither of these men seem to take the idea of being emperor too seriously. That doesn't mean they didn't desire it but the zeal for taking the throne of Rome had really faded. Hostilian didn't do much of anything to protect his position and Gallus was not greatly concerned he would be confronted by any other force, as he simply took the throne. Thus, Gallus makes peace with the barbarians known to history as the Goths (a peace that really admitted Rome had little power to keep these people out of its territory), and heads to Rome to deal with the fact he was the new emperor and needed to let people know he had taken the position. When Gallus finally made it to Rome he had no trouble taking the throne, even receiving confirmation from the Senate that he was emperor. Gallus is said to be on good terms with Hostilian's family, and it was likely this caused Gallus to have no trouble accepting Hostilian as co-emperor. However, Hostilian would only make it to late summer or early fall of that year before he seemed to vanish. There is one account which claims Gallus had him killed, but there is little reason to believe after allowing Hostilian to be co-emperor the more powerful Gallus would take such a step. The more likely truth is the account which says Hostilian died in an outbreak of plague. While it's not clear if it was done before or after Hostilian's death, Gallus would appoint his son, Volusian, Caesar and shortly thereafter (likely right after Hostilian's death) Volusian was made co-emperor.

Almost none of this mattered as Gallus immediately faced trouble, not from others in Rome wanting his throne but from people such as the Eranshahr (by that time simply known as the Persians in spite their being a different people from the original Persians). The real trouble started in Antioch where people rebelled against Rome and started ravaging the Syrian province along with one to the northwest of there. The main instigator of this trouble would then flee to the Persians and Gallus would send Roman troops to take care of it. However, in 252 A.D. the Persians would see the weakness of Rome and invade Armenia destroying a large Roman army in the process. They would then filter down into the Syrian province which lay defenseless before them. There they did great damage to Roman defenses as well as the cities and were met with no significant Roman response. In a show of just how weak Rome had become the Persians would return the following year and again not be resisted by Rome. That aside, a local pagan priest named Uranius would stand up against them and drive the Persians back out of the area. Upon doing this Uranius proclaimed himself emperor, and why not? Having been attacked so easily, it was as if the province had no emperor looking out for it. Since Syria is nothing more than the Roman name for the northern portion of the promised land, we see how, once again, God disrupted the beast's hold on the promised land making it hard for any one people aside from the Jews to claim historical significance in the area.

Back along the northern border, the nomadic Scythians would push in as far as Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), even burning a great Roman temple in Ephesus and head back home with the spoils of their incursion. A province north of Greece in the area of the Balkans was also attacked in 253 A.D. by the Goths, and a governor by the name of Aemilian mounted the defense in that case. What's surprising about this attack is it was getting dangerously close to Rome itself. By Ancient standards and means it might have still been considered a distance away, but for the empire to have weaknesses this deep in should have been greatly alarming! One can argue it did alarm someone, or at the very least destroyed their confidence in the emperor, because by that point the army was done with Gallus. Aemilian encouraged his troops and led them to not just a victory but for the first time in a long time the barbarians were pushed back out of Roman territory without having to cut a deal. Due to this, Aemilian's troops claim victory and collected the spoils of war from the Goths. The army was so happy about all this they named Aemilian the new emperor. This would force Gallus to make an attempt to defend his position, and to do that he would recall legions of the Roman army for help. He even recalled troops from the critical area of Gaul under the command of a man named Valerian. However, Aemilian would move quickly and catch Gallus before Valerian and all these reinforcements could arrive. The story is completely unclear after that, but the end result of the ensuing battle/war was that both Gallus and his

son Volusian were killed in August of 253 A.D.

While Gallus was preparing to defend himself against Aemilian, he had convinced the senate to declare Aemilian an, "enemy of the state." Thus, when Aemilian arrived in Rome after his victory the Senate was hesitant to give him the position of emperor. However, they did finally relent and Aemilian would promise to defend the empire against those attacking from the east, which is something Gallus had totally failed to do. Aemilian would also promise to relinquish his power to the Senate as he considered himself first and foremost a general of the military. All these details would be of little consequence because Valerian was on his way to Rome at the head of a great army. Valerian and his ability was one of the reasons Gallus had recalled him in the first place. History disputes whether Valerian first headed for Rome at Gallus' order or if he did so upon hearing Gallus was dead. In either case, he would march for Rome and at some point before he got there his troops declared him emperor. When Aemilian's troops found out about this they were so afraid they killed Aemilian themselves and accepted Valerian as the new emperor. The Senate would move quickly to recognize Valerian as emperor and the order would be given that Aemilian be excluded from all the official accounts as if he had never been emperor or anyone of importance to the empire.

The first thing Valerian would do is name his son, Gallienus, co-emperor as had become the norm by that point in Roman history. That said, the empire had all but fallen apart. The West was in a state of complete disorder due to the lack of leadership coming out of Rome and in no small part to the constant invasions and threats of barbarians along the borders. The eastern part of the empire had been invaded so heavily (mostly by the Persians) much of it was not under any kind of Roman control at all. Valerian and his son would choose to divide and hope to conquer these many problems. Gallienus would stay in the West and try to bring order back to that part of the empire which was really Rome's heart and soul. Valerian would head east in an attempt to bring that territory back into the empire. It would take until 257 A.D. before Valerian was able to take back Antioch and return the Syrian province to Roman control. However, in the next year the Goths would return to invade Asia Minor and do extensive damage. It was almost as if they were splitting the struggling Roman Empire in half as Valerian, after subduing Syria, had pushed on eastward and his son was still on the other side of the empire handling affairs along the borders north of Rome. To make matters worse, in 259 A.D. Valerian's troops suffered severe losses due to an outbreak of the plague. The Persians besieged the city Valerian was in at the time, and by early summer of 260 A.D. Valerian would suffer total defeat. Valerian would be taken prisoner, and there are disputing accounts as to if he was forced into slavery by the Persian king and died a very humiliating death or if he and his troops were used to engineer a project for the Persians and released late in Valerian's life.

No matter which account holds more truth, Valerian does not show up again in any capacity as a leader in Rome and his son would become sole emperor. Gallienus handled the barbarian problem with great vigor and is credited with many victories against them. Sometime in 255 or 256 A.D. he proclaimed his eldest son the successor to the Roman throne.

This son's name was Valerian II. Like Gallienus and his father Valerian, Gallienus and Valerian II would split, the son holding the border that had for the time been secured and Gallienus moving on to other troublesome areas of the northern border. The true problem for Gallienus would become the all too familiar internal strife of the empire. The dates are not clear but it would appear sometime in/around 258 to 260 A.D. Valerian II died, and there is suspicion that he might have been killed by a Roman commander who is said to have been charged with the military education of Valerian II. This was a man named Ingenuus, and whether he did or did not kill Valerian II, upon his death Ingenuus was declared the new emperor. Gallienus would receive word of this and quickly return to the area to put down this revolt. His army would use a cavalry greatly improved by Gallienus himself and defeat Ingenuus' army. Ingenuus is said to have been killed in the fight or he drowned himself in the river to avoid being captured.

During these same years and incidents a large contingency of barbarians made a major push into Roman territory and Gallienus had to send much of his army to deal with that. The Germanic people, who came to be known as the Franks, invaded Gaul and ransacked major cities all the way into southern Spain. Other barbarian tribes would push directly toward Italy itself, reaching as far as the outskirts of Rome! To defend the city the Senate would be forced to patch together an army which likely consisted of the Praetorian Guard at its core and the strongest citizens of Rome's population. Amazingly they were able to push the barbarians back and send them into retreat. After dealing with the Franks, Gallienus' army would turn toward Rome and intercept the retreating barbarians. The victory would be great enough that one of the barbarian tribes involved, the Alemanni which were a confederation of Germanic tribes, would not bother the empire again for many years. However, another tribe, the Juthungi, crossed the alps with much of the spoil they had gained along with prisoners from Italy. What a shock this must have been to the citizens of the once great Roman Empire!

While all this was going on there was also another attempt made to take the throne by a man named Regalianus who was some kind of Roman military commander or officer of rank in the province just to the east of northern Italy named Pannonia. It's believed he was proclaimed emperor because it was felt so little was being done to defend the heart of Rome against constant invasion. Regalianus, along with his wife, had blood ties back to virtual senatorial royalty which would give his claim some validity. Regalianus would proclaim his province's capital his seat of power and founded his own mint which produced coins bearing he and his wife's images. It is said this might have actually helped Gallienus to focus on defeating the barbarians driving into Spain and Italy at the time because Regalianus would be forced to deal with the barbarian invasions into Pannonia, which was the whole premise for why he was proclaimed emperor in the first place. Regalianus' reign would last around six months but not all of his men would be happy with their choice. Again, details are lacking, but Regalianus was eventually killed during a raid on his capital by a Sarmatian people which was also believed to be helped by his own men. There is also the theory that Gallienus might have invited the raid as a way to weaken Regalianus, but no solid records exist to

tell us for sure.

With all this going on in the West Gallienus had no time to deal with what had happened to his father at the hands of the Persians. Instead it would take a group of men to ignite the push back against the Persians in the East. The man involved would be a fiscal officer named Macrianus Major who had not been at the battle where Valerian was captured because he had held back being in charge of the treasury Valerian had brought with him on this campaign. The other man would be a military commander named Balista, and a third player involved was a man named Odaenathus. He was a local ruler in Syria who would later become very important to the eastern part of Rome. Balista and Macrianus Major would rally what remained of Valerian's troops, and with Odaenathus and his horsemen they would drive the Persians back. However, once again, a Roman success would not be seen as a victory for the empire but an opportunity to gain personal power. Macrianus Major had a deformity in one of his legs which disqualified him to serve as emperor according to Roman law. Thus, he would name his two sons, Macrianus Minor and Quietus, co-emperors. Instead of dealing with the Persians further, Macrianus Major and his son Macrianus Minor would set out for Rome to secure the throne while Balista and Quietus would remain in the East to hold the power they believed they had gained there.

Macrianus Major and Minor would only make it as far as Thrace before they were met by the Roman military commander Aureolus and his forces which, at the very least, included a cavalry. The battle would not go well for Macrianus and his son. They would be surrounded by Aureolus' forces and Macrianus would request he and his son be killed so as not to be taken as prisoners. The army granted that request. This was in the earlier parts of 261 A.D., and back in Syria, Balista and Quietus would find that Odaenathus remained loyal to Emperor Gallienus. Once again, we don't have completely clear facts but what we do know is that whether by orders of Gallienus or by his own initiative Odaenathus would attack Balista and Quietus who's own troops would cease to support them. Both men would be killed by either Odaenathus, their own men, or civilians they attempted to hide among in the area. Gallienus greatly appreciated Odaenathus for his actions and was given formal titles by the emperor. One can understand why Gallienus was grateful because he certainly didn't have the time to march across Asia Minor to put down that half of the rebellion, in no small part because yet another rebellion had already begun!

With Valerian in captivity not everyone was willing to accept his son Gallienus as emperor. As if Gallienus didn't have enough trouble from the outside, another Roman commander named Postumus would be declared emperor. This commander was one of two commanders in charge of troops who went into the alps after the fleeing Juthungi who had taken prisoners and loot from Italy. Much of what was taken would be recovered by Postumus and he would divide the recovered spoils among the military leaders and soldiers of his army. As he returned from that victory he would be met by Gallienus' son Saloninus and his praetorian prefect, a man coordinating the campaigns against the barbarians. Saloninus would demand the recovered spoils be transferred to him. Postumus would resist this order and his men seeing and being a part of this proclaimed Postumus emperor.

They would attack the city Saloninus was stationed in and breaking through into the city killing Saloninus and his prefect. Postumus would establish his capital in northern Gaul and create a splinter "Roman Empire" of his own. By/in 261 A.D. Gallienus had lost total control over the provinces of Gaul, Germania, Britannia, and Hispania. Postumus would establish for himself all the same kinds of institutions he would have had if he'd been the actual emperor of Rome. This was a new approach in many ways or at least the first prominent example of such an approach which succeeded. Postumus would give high positions to so many of those he knew and trusted that his administration would be heavily Gallic. Thus, what he had established came to be known as the Gallic Empire.

In truth, he was successful in defending his territory against attacks from the Germanic people across the border to the north. He was determined to bring peace back to his area of what had been the Roman Empire and he accomplished it to such a great degree, his empire eventually struck coins of better quality and higher value than that of Gallienus' Rome. After spending four years pushing the barbarians, and in particular the Franks, back across the border he would do what would become a common thing for Rome to do and employ Frankish troops to help defend against the Franks! It is likely these Frankish troops were inserted among his own troops instead of being independent forces of their own, but all this did was quicken the pace at which people who were once considered barbarians were integrated into the empire's people. Rome was greatly influencing barbarian people while also being influenced by them. Such facts are why we are looking at what we are looking at in order to understand the Europe the Jews were scattered among, which in ways greatly persecuted the Jews while in other ways ended up helping what God said He'd one day bring about. It is also why I have said it's debatable when and exactly how the Roman Empire ended. In so many ways the struggle we have discussed concerning the world going from different major powers developing and fighting for the control of the beast, to the world being people struggling to keep the beast alive at all is right in front of us during this time period. There may have been plenty of individuals and small groups who wished to be or declare who the emperor was, but that is just evidence of the fact people desired the system to work while at the same time became a major part of why it never was going to work. This is the Tower of Babel effect doing its job.

What's really interesting about Postumus was the fact he seems to make it clear he had no designs on the idea he would one day be the emperor of Rome. His priority was totally on the province he considered his responsibility along with the other provinces that went along with him. While being a separate entity Postumus' Gallic Empire remained very Roman. That said, we don't know but that Postumus might have found it an honor if Gallienus recognized his rulership of the area and been more than happy to work side by side with the emperor in their overall defense against the barbarians. What might be the most important consideration at this point in the study is that with all that being true along with facts about Odaenathus we have yet to cover, there's the point that the Roman Empire was beginning to look and act a lot like later Europe would become. The empire was beginning to fracture into smaller chunks of territory some of which was under the direct control of Rome, some only loyal

to Rome, and some totally independent but not at odds with Rome if Rome wasn't aggressive toward them. In so many ways this is the easiest and best way to describe what Europe became and has now been for several hundred years. There has always been conflict among the European states while at the same time they desired to see the entire area unified. In earlier times of our more modern history we saw strong aggressive moves to unify Europe. Such ideas are what eventually led to what we call World War I and World War II. In much more recent times we have seen political moves such as we see in the development and existence of the European Union.

Back to more ancient history, by 261 A.D. the Roman Empire showed signs of these later truths but Gallienus had been busy for about four years doing much the same as Postumus, which was attempting to push back the barbarian threat. Finally in 265 A.D. Gallienus found or made time to deal with Postumus' rebellion more directly. His first attempt would not succeed and that was largely based on the fact Aureolus' cavalry failed to contain Postumus who was able to escape Rome's assault. Aureolus subsequently would be demoted for the failure, setting the stage for yet another rebellion by a man who thought he could do better at leading the empire. Gallienus himself would lead the next attempt to take down Postumus, but while holding Postumus under siege in one of his cities, Gallienus was wounded. This forced Gallienus to withdraw and abandon the effort. In the end Gallienus would find no more time to waste on Postumus. He wasn't threatening the Roman Empire's existence or Gallienus' position. Others were and Gallienus would need to turn his attention back to such matters/people if Rome was to survive. However, in early 269 A.D. Postumus would face rebellion from one of his own military leaders. The man would be declared emperor by his local garrison and other troops in the area. It took Postumus a few months but he did finally catch and kill this usurper. The victory would be one of the shortest in history as Postumus' men wanted to loot the defeated city where the usurper was captured, but Postumus considered it a city of his empire and refused to allow it. As he attempted to hold them back he would be killed by his own soldiers. After killing Postumus the soldiers would then elect one of their own to be the new emperor; a man named Marius. This would be a short-lived affair as well, lasting only around two to three months before he was killed by a man believed to have been raised to Praetorian Prefect by Postumus. In any case, he was responsible for the death of Marius and after doing so was declared emperor by his troop.

While all this was going on in the West Odaenathus was busy in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. He would not be satisfied with the fact he had driven the Persians out of Syria and would go after them crossing the Euphrates River in 262 A.D. He would win decisive victories and systematically restored to Rome the territory it had lost to Persia. However, he would still not end his pursuit of the Persians and continue fighting his way eastward until he was at their capital city. The city would withstand Odaenathus' siege but he had gained a great victory over them nonetheless. He would celebrate his victory and declare himself, "King of Kings." He would also crown his son, Hairan I, co-king. Odaenathus was now in control of the Levant

which at the time referred to territory encompassing all of the promised land, the Roman portion of Mesopotamia, and the eastern portion of Asia Minor. Odaenathus would continue to be loyal to Gallienus recognizing him as emperor of the Roman Empire of which his territories were a part of. However, for all intents and purposes Odaenathus was an independent ruler reigning as king over what had been most all the eastern portion of the Roman Empire. Since he had no conflict with Gallienus and the emperor had more than enough trouble to deal with in the West, it could be said Odaenathus was as autonomous a ruler as Postumus was with his Gallic Empire.

In 266 A.D. Odaenathus mounted a second offensive against the Persians, marching his army all the way to their capital and once again laying siege to the city. However, before he could bring the city to its knees he was forced to make a hasty return home because coastal cities in the north of Asia Minor were being attacked by barbarians. Odaenathus might have been free to do his own thing as it relates to how much control Rome exerted over him but the barbarians didn't care if it was the Roman Empire, a splinter kingdom, or something else entirely, they attacked what they wanted almost at will. Odaenathus, along with his son, would arrive in 267 A.D. to see the barbarians mostly already at sea; their boats loaded with the spoils they had captured. Clarity for what happened next is again something we lack but it is believed most of the barbarians were destroyed in a sea battle with ships which were part of Odaenathus' military. Another belief is they became shipwrecked for the most part but no matter how the barbarians were defeated, somehow Odaenathus along with his son and co-king Hairan I were assassinated during or shortly after this engagement. The means as well as the why this took place have been greatly speculated about but no solid evidence has ever been found to explain what is or might be the real truth.

Odaenathus' title would fall to his ten year old son, Vaballathus. Being so young he could not hope to truly hold the power of the office and so he was under the regency of Odaenathus' wife and his mother, Zenobia. Zenobia turned out to be a powerful leader as she took full control of what Odaenathus left behind, but in a move her husband never seemed to consider taking, she would not stand back and be considered a vassal kingdom of Rome. She desired to maintain good relations with Rome but she would take full charge of the entire Roman east, and using the city of Palmyra as her capital she would eventually form what would come to be known as the Palmyrene Empire. This "empire" would eventually span from Asia Minor all the way to Egypt, holding vast areas of Mesopotamia and even parts of Arabia. Of course, if Rome was going to remain any shadow of the power it once had been, it could not allow this to stand, but the simple fact Rome's power had waned so badly that any of these other "empires" were able to exist says a lot about the true state Rome was in!

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

children were going to be in conflict, but without complaint she let it happen in God's will and timing. The children would be born and even in their birth there would be signs these boys were not going to be easy to raise, but they would do their best to teach them the ways of God. One would go forward accepting that teaching and seek to have God with such zeal it led to him making many mistakes because he forgot to seek God's will in how to go about things and wait for God to show him what was right as his parents had done. All that aside, that would be better than the other son who would not bother to seek God or care about His promises to this family. As I mentioned above, Isaac and Rebekah had to believe God would give them a child at some point or do something else amazing with their lives in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham. They also knew at some point the only way for the family to be a great nation of people was for more children to be born into it! Now they had two children and that might have seemed like a start, but since one did not want the ways of God for and in his life, the plan of God would fall back to there only being one as had been the case with Isaac. This meant yet another generation would pass before any real growth in the family becoming a nation could be seen. However, that did not seem to even enter Isaac's and Rebekah's mind. They would go forward and raise these two boys with no indication they ever again worried about having more children for any reason. They walked in faith and lived in faith in a way so rare, most of us let the fact slip by without seeing it or considering all that it means.

This is why the very next verse takes us right into the idea of who these boys became. In a breath of reading the story we go from their birth to their adult lives. Does that mean the conflict subsided and raising these two children turned out easier than it first appeared it would be? Not at all, but all the troubles and struggles their parents faced in raising these two, always at conflict boys, was handled with God at their side. The details of the hardships they faced at times are not of further importance to our understanding of the representation, but anyone who's parented children knows the tears that had to have been shed at times. It is with that understanding that we go into verse 27 to begin to see the facts and stories that are important to our understanding, and what we find is that, just as one might suspect, even as adults these two sons were as different as day and night! Esau had grown into being a man of the outdoors; a hunter of great skill. Jacob, on the other hand, was a man who lived more indoors and was much less flamboyant. The word "plain" is used to describe Jacob and while some would say he was dull or boring, what we are really being told here is the fact Jacob was very much a, what you see is what you get kind of man. He did what needed to be done and we see this kind of steady endurance for the things of life came in handy as later on he worked seven years for his future father-in-law in order to receive his wife. Then he worked another seven years because he wasn't given the woman he had wanted and still desired her. He would go on to endure the competitive nature of his two wives and the birth of multiple children all in the course of still working for his father-in-law and attempting to build a life of his own.

Say what you want about Jacob but the man had endurance for the things this life and world throw at you;

endurance I doubt very much was in Esau! Esau being a skilled hunter was a man who went out and took what he wanted. He was more dramatic about what he did and how he lived his life. That idea should be remembered when talking about the selling of his birthright. As I said before, we can get so focused on what Jacob did and judging him for it, we practically ignore Esau's actions in the situation. However, before we get into that we want to talk a little about what verse 28 tells us, and that's the fact Esau was favored by Isaac while Jacob was favored by Rebekah. When teaching these verses in more of a live setting where people can make their thoughts known and ask questions I have always found this verse to be taken by many as showing favoritism on the part of Isaac and Rebekah. I've even heard it emphatically argued that this favoritism likely led to a lot of the problems we see between the boys. There's the argument that Jacob always resented that his father didn't love him as much as he did Esau, and Esau had the same problem in seeing their mother loved Jacob more. While the word "love" is used here and there is no way to boil that down to something less than "favored," we should not take that as meaning Isaac didn't love Jacob and Rebekah didn't love Esau. There is too much good shown to us in the character of these two individuals to believe they would go off and make such a drastic mistake as to show favoritism in being the parents of these two boys.

That is to point out, Jacob did not become a man who lived indoors because his mother spent more time with him and his father showed less interest. Esau didn't become a man of the outdoors to get away from his mother who clearly loved Jacob more and outside was where his father worked and who loved him more. This is the kind of argument one is making was the case when we suggest the problems between the two were worsened, if not continued, by their parents' favoritism. The truth of the matter is that this verse is simply trying to explain to us the natural course of the way humans relate. Again, we land at the point these two boys had conflict from day one and the reason for their conflict was the fact they were so different from each other. So different that being together had to be difficult. Almost every opinion one had could be counted on to be the opposite of the opinion the other had. This showed up in the very lifestyles they favored. No doubt from his first steps Esau begged to go with his father when he was leaving to go out into the fields to tend to the flocks and the herdsman who watched over them. On the other hand, Jacob was more than content to stay with his mother and do the chores more immediately in and around the house. In the end result there is the simple truth Isaac ended up spending far more time with Esau teaching him the things he knew and was good at while Jacob did the same with his mother.

Isaac would become the parent who understood Esau and his nature far better than he ever could Jacob. Rebekah would become far more familiar with the thoughts and feelings of Jacob. She understood his mind better than Esau's because Esau did not likely spend much time with her in the same way Jacob didn't spend much time with his father. The love talked about in this verse is really referring to the nature of attachment between humans and it helps us understand later actions and events. It's not the one parent favored one child and the other parent the other. It's more that each parent instinctively reacted knowing one of their children better than the other. This

brought the appearance they each took sides, and this is especially accused of Rebekah. However, we only get the truth of it all correctly in our minds when we pay attention to the entirety of the story. We are told one of the things Isaac loved best about Esau was his ability to make a “pottage” or what today we might call a stew from wild venison he hunted. Food can have such a connection with memories. If we have good memories that go along with certain foods, they can taste better and/or be more enjoyable than they would be without those memories. No doubt Isaac had good memories of Esau coming back from the field with a fresh kill and making a stew with it which they would eat after a hard day's work.

That said, Jacob could also cook and we find that to be true as we go into verse 29. Esau had evidently had a long day out in the field and was very hungry. I'm sure with as hard of work as was done in those days it's true Esau was extremely tired and hungry. However, there is some drama in Esau's words here. It could not have been uncommon for him to come in out of the field tired and hungry. I'm sure there were many times he went out hunting all day without getting anything, and even if he did, he might have been tired enough on the day he didn't want to cook what he had gotten. It also was likely a common occurrence for him to simply stay out in the field and sleep, as we say, under the stars. Thus, it's possible he had not been back to the home tent in a few days. In many ways this whole event has all the earmarks of being a time when Esau had been out for some time, maybe until his supplies had run out, and making it back home he was hungry to be sure, but it was a hunger of his own making. It was also not as if he was going to starve or pass out. The word “faint” here is to describe the fact Esau had pushed himself well past needing a snack or something to help him get through the rest of the day. He was truly hungry and ready for a meal!

This is why he asks Jacob to give him some of the stew he was cooking. Jacob had been there making a meal which in the case of stew would not have been him simply opening a can and heating it on the stove. Cooking stew was/is a time consuming process of cooking the meat until it is ready and cutting up vegetables to add to it. Then when it's all in the pot it needs to slow cook for quite a while to really blend the flavors and be good to eat. In many ways a good stew made from scratch can be an all day process. Thus, what Esau was asking for was food Jacob had taken a lot of time on; something much better than Esau could have come up with on his own with no more effort than he wanted to put in. While none of that means Jacob should have begrudged it to his brother, it's clear these two men had a rivalry since before birth. Esau was “loved” by his father because he made such good stew from the things he hunted. Now, Esau was sitting here wanting stew Jacob had made because Esau was clearly too tired to make something for himself. Jacob saw this as an opportunity. He had the upper hand in the situation so he decided he'd find out what a good meal was worth to his brother. Sadly the point many people miss when reading and considering this story is that we didn't truly find out what a meal was worth to Esau at that moment in time; we find out how little his birthright was worth to him!

The birthright, of course, is what we see Jacob ask for in verse 31, and in the very next verse we see the true drama of the moment on Esau's part. Esau doesn't just make the deal with Jacob, he gives an excuse as to why he is willing to give up such an important thing for one meal. Esau claims he's at the point of death and if he was to die the birthright wouldn't do him any good anyway. It is for this cause Esau sells the most valuable thing the family owned, and the fact he gives it away for just some stew, the specific kind of which was identified by it's reddish color, is why we are told Esau was then known as “Edom.” The very fact a meal of this red stew could be so important to him at any time and for any reason branded him for life. This is of particular importance as this incident is often overlooked almost as if it didn't matter some years later when the time came for Isaac to hand over the birthright to Esau. As students of the Bible it's completely wrong for us to see this incident as nothing more than a foolish thing for either of the brothers to do and meaningless in the grand scheme of things. God preserves this incident for us and makes it part of the record of His Word because it does hold weight. It simply doesn't matter how many people would say it's stupid to hold Esau to this sale of his birthright because it was almost a joke or Esau really was at the point of death from starvation and Jacob took advantage of his brother to get what he wanted.

The birthright we are talking about is the very reason Terah took Abram and his wife Sarah out of Mesopotamia to bring them on their way to the land of promise and work on building what they'd need to start a household in that land where they would be strangers. This birthright is the reason Abraham and Sarah were eventually so worried about not having children that Sarah would give her handmaiden Hagar to Abraham to have a son with. This birthright and it's importance is why God performed a miracle for Abraham and Sarah to have Isaac in their very old age in spite of the fact Ishmael was the technical first born of Abraham and traditionally the one to hold claim to the birthright. This birthright is why God told Abraham to listen to his wife when she told him to send Hagar and Ishmael away which was one of the most painful things Abraham ever had to do! This birthright is why Abraham one day has his servant swear to him he would not take Isaac back to Mesopotamia but that he would go instead to retrieve Isaac a wife from there. This birthright was the reason Isaac and Rebekah sought The Lord for why they had not had a child and waited 20 years to see it come to pass. Those are just the highlights of an even longer list of things and ways this birthright was important to this family, the world, and most importantly, the will of God! Esau trading it away even to save his own life should have been unthinkable, and no matter how virtuous or not Jacob's intent for suggesting this price was, it showed, at the very least, this birthright was more important to Jacob than it was to Esau. In the end result, that is all that mattered. Jacob cared about the promises of God and Esau did not!

Until next time, Shalom!

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 2

and preserving such facts could be witness to the events. It's not a hard thing to believe a more detailed story about how Ruth had come to this moment was recounted by Ruth herself, her mother-in-law Naomi, as well as others who might have firsthand knowledge of the events; All for the purpose of putting such things on the official record of the day. We might think it unreliable that the record keeping system of the day were elders slated with the responsibility, but in such a time, elders existed because it was important. They did their job and they did it well. The fact those records were later written down means they were important enough to survive until they could be written!

That is the really important thought in all this because what we do know is there never has been any dispute among Christians, and far more importantly the Jews, from whom we get the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), as to the authenticity of this book! Never has there been question about if the facts are correct or not. There is no long running argument by anyone that this is a book written down so far after the facts one should believe at least part of its content might be made up as filler between small facts only believed to be known. What this tells us is that for generations stretching as far as we can tell all the way back to the time of at least David and Samuel, this account has been accepted and passed down as correct historical facts as to the line and lineage of David. At the time of the writing of the Gospel of Matthew we see confirmation that the information in Ruth is accepted facts as Matthew goes over the lineage of Christ, and in going through that time period of said lineage tells us David's grandfather Obed was the son of Boaz through Ruth. (Matt. 1:1-17) This we must be clear on no matter what anyone wanting to dispute the Bible argues, and it can be said of so much of the canon of Scripture. At the lowest end of the argument the Bible is at least as reliable a history as any other history recorded, claimed to have been recorded, or believed to have been recorded at the same time various parts of the Bible were or take place. The argument to the Bible's accuracy only goes up from there, and why? Because in spite of the fact secular historians and scholars don't want to talk about it, most all the arguments they use in their attempt to discredit the Bible's record can be made even more vehemently against accepted history taught as total facts in many schools all over the world! The idea that most history of the ancient past was verbally handed down and then at some much later time written down is extremely common and understood clearly to be the case, but the Bible has great evidence that most all of it was written as or not long after the events.

So many records of human existence that have been found or preserved which can be said are very old are in and of themselves most always someone's copy of an earlier record of which no one knows whether the earlier record was verbal or written. Any number of mistakes and/or political changes could have been made to the record while copying or recording it. Such things have always been up to the writer, and it's well known in some cases the writer did, in fact, change certain facts to fit what he wanted at the time. It takes a very long lecture to cover all the reasons this is true and known to be true, but it's all out there to be found if you don't want to take my word for it. The point is, when you look at the Bible's record of history you are talking about history that was preserved (as it relates to the

Hebrew Bible) by very religious people who at all points had at least certain people who were sticklers for preserving the records as they existed no matter who liked it or didn't. The copying "errors" the Hebrew Bible contains are known to be there because copies that do not match have been found and rarely do such things change the real meaning of a story or even a particular point made, much less the overall truth the Bible gives us. Those copies that were made by some for the sake of changing things to suit their own agenda are also known and not accepted as reliable copies by anyone who does not still hold a particular agenda which they serve. The Book of Ruth has been held for a very, very long time as part of the Hebrew Bible accepted and preserved through the generations of God's chosen nation. Little to no history in and of humanity has been so carefully cared for over time as that of the Hebrew Bible!

That fact actually brings us to a couple of interesting points about the Book of Ruth which our questions about each book don't really ask us to look at but should be mentioned here. As we come upon the Book of Ruth in the order the Christian Bible has it, we find it comes between the Book of Judges and I Samuel. This is appropriate as it serves as both a bridge as well as some great fill in the blanks historical information between Judges and I Samuel. However, as the Jews originally preserved the information contained in the Book of Ruth, it was not really a standalone book. The information was originally placed with the information we find in the Book of Judges. When we did the introduction to the Book of Judges we talked about how the book was not really written as a cohesive book in and of itself but was put together from a collection of historical facts recorded during the time period it covers. If we understand even the smallest degree of Biblical chronology we know the events of Ruth took place during the time of the judges. Thus, as much as its story does not have anything to do with the judges themselves, it was collected with the set of writings that would eventually create the Book of Judges we know today.

It's one of those things that simply made sense when you consider how the Jews were attempting to maintain these records. However, the Hebrew Bible was eventually organized into three main collections of writings known together as the TANAKH. That designation is derived from the names of those three main collections which are the Torah (The Law), the Nevi'im (The Prophets), and the Kethuvim (The Writings). Those familiar with at least this study have had it pounded into their heads that the Torah consists of the first five books of what Christians call the Old Testament, and the Torah is also the beginning of the Jewish arrangement. The next part of the Jewish arrangement, the Nevi'im, is divided into two subsections, The Former Prophets and The Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets continue the arrangement Christians are used to starting with Joshua and Judges but the Book of Ruth does not follow. Instead it goes directly to the Book of Samuel which is one book covering what the Christian arrangement splits into two, I Samuel and II Samuel. The same is true of the Book of Kings which is next. The Latter Prophets follows and it begins with Isaiah. If one skips ahead in the Christian arrangement to what Christians refer to as The Major Prophets this doesn't look too different. The Jewish arrangement is, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. Notable differences are that Lamentations is missing and the Jewish arrangement does not include Daniel. Instead, it

goes to a book that in and of itself is a collection and it's called "The Twelve Minor Prophets." This book contains all twelve of what Christians see as the last twelve books of the Old Testament and also referred to as, The Minor Prophets.

We then move in the Jewish arrangement to the Kethuvim or The Writings. This last major section of the Hebrew Bible contains three subsections. In English they are: The Three Poetic Books, The Five Scrolls, and Other Books. The Three Poetic Books is where we find Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. The Five Scrolls consist of Song of Songs (many Christians know it as Song of Solomon), and then the book we've all been waiting for - Ruth! The rest are Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The other Books contain Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (as one book), and Chronicles which consists of both I and II Chronicles just like Samuel and Kings. I know we have covered that arrangement before in this study but it's always good to get a refresher in once in awhile. In so many ways the Jewish arrangement of the books makes more sense, but Christians learning them in the arrangement they do is totally fine and there is no reason once you learn them in the Christian arrangement to attempt to switch. That said, how the Jews arrange them is something good to know and if you can commit it to memory it can come in very handy at times as we attempt to understand the books in the Jewish light they were written to see them in! All that said and covered, the only real difference we are interested in for our discussion here is that of Ruth. While it originally made sense to the Jews to put this book in with the collection of stories that is the Book of Judges, the fact it chronologically takes place during the same time period is in many ways overshadowed by the fact it is very much a stand-alone story.

That is to say, it has a life of its own! It's the story of historical people we care about because of their connection to David. As Christians that also means we care due to their connection to Christ. As I said above, its events are not in any way about the judges. The fact it takes place during the time period judges were active as leaders in Israel is simply that, a fact important to the backdrop of the book. When it comes to its real historical value, the book is far better studied in the light of its connection to why it was preserved. The bottom line is, if you wanted it where it chronologically goes, it would interrupt the Book of Judges and harm the narrative there. If you wanted to put it more in line with the story of David you'd have to place it in some awkward position in the Book of Samuel. Just exactly where the most appropriate placement would be for the information within that book could be hotly debated over. Thus, it only makes sense to put it where the Jews put it which presents it for what it is; historical information that brings some real color to the story of King David and how the true lineage of Christ doesn't really start with David. Within the lineage of David there are people who served God with their whole heart going all the way back to Adam and Eve's grandson Enos who is credited with causing there to be a camp of people in this world that were counter to the camp of people started by Cain. A camp of people who, "...then began men to call upon the name of the LORD." Genesis 4:26 What a beautiful thought it is to think about all the battering those who have attempted to

serve The Lord in this world have taken, yet there has always been those people like Ruth who bind the truth to the thread of time ensuring people never forget their Creator!

While on and in that thought pattern let me just point out Ruth's placement in the Jewish arrangement has nothing to do with relegating it to a more minor position in the whole of Scripture. It is simply to recognize the book for what it is; a book that, while it fits into the timeline of the Bible, does not really fit into the flow of someone wanting to recount the history the Bible covers. That said, all these "Scrolls" and "Other Books" are writings we are blessed beyond reason to have! Just look at them. How much would be missing in being able to understand the overall events of where we've been and where we're going combined with what God has and will do about it if we did not have the Book of Daniel? That's why Christians place it in the five Major Prophets part of the Bible's arrangement. However, if one thinks about it, it's just like the Book of Ruth. While we know where we are in the history when Daniel seeks and receives this information, it's very clear how much the information is to be studied for what it is, not so much its chronology in the overall story line of the Bible. What makes that fact clear when it comes to Daniel is that his vision covers time spanning from where he is at that moment all the way to where we are now and where it will all end. Then, after the first appearing of The Messiah on this earth, John is given a revelation that is really due to Daniel's fasting and prayers. Is that not the most amazing thought! John did not seek in any specific way as Daniel did to see what lay ahead; he simply opened himself to God's will and found he was the right person at the right place and time to receive what Daniel had been told he would not get because time needed to pass before it would make sense! (Dan. 12:4-12)

The Bible is this incredible beyond words gift to mankind and only those with eyes to see and ears to hear are going to gain Its value! I could go on to talk about how Ezra-Nehemiah is a book that also makes sense on that same level as Daniel and Ruth in spite of it being a more pure historical book. Its placement outside the prophetic or historical books gives it a focus we should not overlook and which I do not have the space to cover here. Chronicles is the overlapping information to Kings for the most part but it is a more official royal record that has been amazingly preserved in spite of Kings giving us the same historical outline. I could go on about Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and the Book of Esther but we just don't have the space in this segment. Also we do not want to pull our focus totally away from the Book of Ruth which we are discussing here. It's simply my hope and prayer that looking at the facts we have covered and considering them will excite us and cause us to realize what an amazing thing we hold in our hands when we pick up the Bible. When I think about God's grace to us in not leaving us to what so many Christians are falsely taught faith is, it brings tears to my eyes. I repeat, faith is not blind belief, it's a relationship with our Creator Who has given us a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path! (Ps. 119:105)

Let's stay in God's Word!