



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 41”

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



The Biblical Design of Gender, Part 41

Ruth 1:16-17

16 But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.”

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series on the Biblical Design of Gender is that God has designed man as the cooperative coalition of husband and wife so that can successfully achieve the objective that God has given us to exercise dominion over the earth, developing wisdom and knowledge in preparation for further responsibility in our eternal life.

In our last lesson, we reviewed the thinking of the Israelites that was represented by the text of that lesson, **Judges 17:6**, which says:

6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

That verse is repeated as **Judges 21:25**, which is the last verse in the book of Judges. Based upon the Biblical chronicle of the willfulness of man and the disobedience of man to the Law of God, **Judges 21:25** could be repeated as the last verse of many of the books of the Bible. But, near the end of the very last book of the Bible, **Revelation 19:9, 11-16** tells us:

9 Then [the angel] said to [John], “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And [the angel] said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike



the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

This passage of Scripture is a description of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. But chronologically, in terms of our time, the biblical history of the nation of Israel precedes the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Israel was seduced away from the worship of the King of King and the Lord of Lords by those that lived in the Promised Land and postulated the worship of idols. So, the Israelites forsook the great plan of God and, as **Judges 17:6** says: **6 In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.**

As our study of the Bible moves past the disobedience of Israel to the Word of God that lead to the failed military conquest of the Promised Land by the Israelites, the topic shifts from battleground issues to domestic issues.

The book of Ruth is oddly relevant in our current society. In this Biblical reference, we have the example of a matriarchy, a female headed household, albeit not because of intentional abandonment by the men, but because of widowhood.

The book begins with the story of the family of Elimelech and Naomi, which consisted of their two sons Mahlon and Chilion. Elimelech moved his family to Moab because of a famine that decimated the crops in their home city of Bethlehem.

The Moabites were not one of the Canaanite tribes that God told the Israelites to destroy. You may remember, from our earlier lessons on Biblical history, that Abraham's nephew Lot was the head of the one family saved during the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot's wife disobeyed the instructions given to their family by the angel to not look back as they fled Sodom, and, as a result, was turned into a pillar of salt, leaving Lot and his two daughters as the only survivors of the destruction. As God destroyed all of the cities of the plain upon which Sodom and Gomorrah stood, Lot's daughters thought that the world had come to an end and that their father was the only man left, so each of them decided to have children by their father to repopulate the world. Moab was the son that Lot's oldest daughter incestuously bore to him, and the Moabites were his descendents.

So, when the Bethlehem famine occurred, Moab was an acceptable place for Elimelech to lead his family to weather the famine. The family found a certain level of prosperity in Moab, but unfortunately, Elimelech died, leaving his wife Naomi and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, to fend for themselves in Moab. Rather than travelling back to Israel to find wives, Elimelech's two sons, being without the guidance of their father, found Moabite women to marry. But after ten years of marriage, Mahlon and Chilion's lives were cut short, leaving the



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widowed Naomi with the two widowed Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth.

Generally speaking, in the mind of a woman, there is a big difference between a daughter and a daughter-in-law. And although Naomi and her daughters-in-law had had a relationship for ten years, the glue that held them together was their mutual relationship with Naomi's sons, as Naomi and her daughters-in-law were of different ethnicities. So, in Moab, Naomi was a widow woman with a deceased husband, two deceased sons, and no extended family, living in a foreign country with two foreign daughters-in-law.

If there is one thing that a widow needs, it is her family. To most women, a family bond is of the utmost importance. Women are hormonally designed to focus on bonded relationships, as physical intimacy is designed to cause bonding in a woman. Once a woman leaves her father and mother and becomes one with her husband and experiences physical intimacy, as **Genesis 2:24** implies, a woman's primary bond changes from her parents to her spouse, and her primary role changes from being a daughter to being a wife, and subsequently, a mother. So rather than returning a widow to her birth family, the Bible aligns a widow with her children and her husband's family, with whom she has become one.

Deuteronomy 25:5-6 tells us:

5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the [husband's] family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

This form of marriage is known as Levirate marriage, from the Latin word "levir", which means "husband's brother". Interestingly, Levirate marriage is commanded providing that the woman in question does not have a son. If she does have a son, her son is her primary caretaker, and the husband's brother is secondary. **Proverbs 15:20** and **19:26** tells us:

20 A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother.

26 He who mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach.

So a widow's son is her primary next of kin, and her husband's brother is called upon in case she has no son. The Lord specified the complete line of inheritance for a deceased man in the case of Zelophehad's daughters, that we have previously studied. **Numbers 27:6, 8-11** records:

6 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying:

8 And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a man dies and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter.

9 If he has no daughter, then you shall give his inheritance to his brothers.

10 If he has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to his father's



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brothers.

11 And if his father has no brothers, then you shall give his inheritance to the relative closest to him in his family, and he shall possess it.’ ” And it shall be to the children of Israel a statute of judgment, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

And, as we shall see as the episode continues, the responsibility for taking care of the deceased man’s wife is part of the man’s inheritance.

When the Bible speaks of an inheritance, it is predominantly speaking of a plot of land. A plot of land was allocated to each family in Israel, except for the Levites, when the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land. And those land designations were intended to be permanent; although the Israelites could buy and sell land, they could only do so temporarily. Let me explain.

God based His Laws with man on the premise of work and rest, generally in proportions of six periods of work, followed by a period of rest. **Deuteronomy 5:12-14** tells us:

12 ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

God extended the concept of the Sabbath, six periods of labor followed by a period of rest, to the land that He gave Israel. **Leviticus 25:1-7** tells us:

1 And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying,

2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD.

3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit;

4 but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

5 What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land.

6 And the sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you,

7 for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land—all its produce shall be for food.

The intent of verse 4 of Leviticus 25 is that, during the seventh year, the Israelites could not legally fertilize their fields, plant crops or employ other



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manners of cultivation as they normally would during the first six years of the period. Verse 5 says that the Israelites could not store the grain or the grape products during the seventh years as they would in a normal harvest during the first six years of the period. Verse 6 tells us that the Israelites could eat the produce from the field or the vine during the seventh year, but the Israelites had to either store up grain during the sixth year in preparation for the seventh year, or eat what grew of itself on an ad-hoc basis during the seventh year.

Interestingly, God gave a Sabbath to the entire Israelite society as well.

Leviticus 25:8-17 records:

8 'And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years.

10 And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

11 That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine.

12 For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field.

13 'In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession.

14 And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another.

15 According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you.

16 According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to you according to the number of the years of the crops.

Since the "workday" of a field is seven years, six years on and one year off, God decrees that after seven "days" of seven years, all of the fields in the entire society get restored to their original condition. Each family could either sell part of their inheritance or their inheritance in its entirety because of their economic condition, but the Lord decreed that, at the conclusion of the fifty year cycle, all sales would be cancelled and every plot in the Promised Land would return to the tribe, clan and family to whom it was originally given by God.

This condition points out that God's reason for the Sabbath rest is the restoration of either man, or the field, or the society, to its' original factory condition. Work deteriorates the condition of man, the field and the society, and the Sabbath restores them.



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So, although Elimelech and Naomi moved their family to Moab, Elimelech still has an inheritance in Israel. Since Elimelech and his sons were deceased, their land inheritance had to be redeemed in the year of Jubilee by a male relative of Elimelech. Since Elimelech's sons were dead, the Levitical law says that Naomi should be married to her nearest kinsman and bear a son by him, which will be named, not for the near kinsman, but for Elimelech, and will become the husband of one of Naomi's daughters-in-law.

Thus, when Naomi evaluated her situation, she decided that her best course of action was to rely on the tenets of Levirate marriage and return home to Israel, which was the place in which she could best potentially find a new mate. However, Naomi had two Moabite daughters-in-law as encumbrances.

Leviticus 25 tells us that the male offspring of the Mahlon and Chilion's Moabite wives were entitled to the Mahlon and Chilion's inheritance, and, since Mahlon and Chilion had fathered no sons, the Moabite wives could receive the inheritance as the fruit of Levirate marriage. The problem was that Mahlon and Chilion's wives were Moabites. **Deuteronomy 23:3** tells us:

3 "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever,

Naomi had no guarantee that she would find a close relative that would agree to marry her, and she certainly had no expectation of producing husbands for two Moabite women, whom God indicated that the Israelites ought not marry. Thus, Naomi developed a solution to her family problem as she started on the journey back to Israel. **Ruth 1:8-9** tells us:

8 And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each to her mother's house. The LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

9 The LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband." So she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

Naomi instructed her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab to find a husband among their native people in the same way that she, Naomi, was going back to Israel to find a husband among her native people. But the daughters-in-law were not enamored of Naomi's solution, as **Ruth 1:10** records:

10 And they said to her, "Surely we will return with you to your people."

But Naomi defined Levirate marriage for the daughters-in-law in the narrowest possible terms, as **Ruth 1:11-13** records:

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Are there still sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

12 Turn back, my daughters, go—for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, if I should have a husband tonight and should also bear sons,

13 would you wait for them till they were grown? Would you restrain



yourselves from having husbands? No, my daughters; for it grieves me very much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD has gone out against me!”

Naomi wants a husband herself, and she also wants the Moabites to have husbands. Naomi thinks that the best chance of this happening is that the Moabite women stay in Moab and marry Moabite men while she goes back to Israel to find an Israelite. And I agree with Naomi that her assessment is probably the most likely method to accomplish her objective. But the stress of breaking the emotional bond formed between the woman showed itself, as **Ruth 1:14-15** records:

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to [Naomi].

15 And [Naomi] said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.”

Ruth is not Orpah’s blood sister, but Ruth and Orpah share the sisterhood of Moabite ethnicity. Naomi is trying to persuade Ruth to follow in Orpah’s footsteps and return to Moab by postulating that there is solace for Ruth in Moab, but not in Israel. But Ruth is of a different opinion.

Sometime during her marriage to Chilion, her husband and her mother-in-law’s influence cause her to become converted to the worship of God. Ruth’s primary desire was to maintain her relationship with God.

Ruth found herself in that which looked like a bad situation, through no fault of her own, and a trip back to Moab would put Ruth in charge of her own destiny. However, a trip to Israel would put Ruth under the protection of the Word of God. Ruth would be able to rely on the relationship that she had developed with God during her marriage to Naomi’s son, trusting that God would facilitate her Levirate marriage.

So Ruth was not looking at her situation from a human perspective, which would have led her to Moab, but rather, from the perspective of a believer in God. So Ruth rejected the request of her mother-in-law, as our text, **Ruth 1:16-17** tells us:

16 But Ruth said: “Entreat me not to leave you, Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If anything but death parts you and me.”

That was a passionate statement of Ruth’s determination to worship the God of Israel and to be Naomi’s companion. Ruth did not want to be Naomi’s Moabite daughter-in-law, as was Orpah. Ruth saw Naomi as her mother, as Naomi had been instrumental in introducing Ruth to God.

The book of Ruth is the account of one that was looking for the King, one that wants to leave the land in which there is no king in order to do that which is



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right in the King's eyes. And Ruth was not the only one outside of the Kingdom that would like to find their way inside; who wanted to forsake the land where there is no king to reach the land of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the Lord Jesus Christ. Ruth's episode parallels that of Cornelius, the Roman centurion whom the Holy Spirit led to send men to the town of Joppa to receive the preached word of the Christ from the Apostle Peter. Peter, who, after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, became the primary preacher of the gospel among the Jews in Jerusalem, had travelled to Joppa to minister to a woman named Dorcas, a member of the church in Joppa, whom had died an untimely death. Peter came to Joppa to raise her from the dead.

As Peter was in Joppa ministering to the saints after performing this notable miracle, the Holy Spirit stopped Peter from ministering to minister a new truth to him. **Acts 10:9-16** tells us:

9 The next day, as [the men from Cornelius] went on their journey [to Joppa] and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

10 Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

11 and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

12 In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

13 And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

14 But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

15 And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

16 This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

While Peter pondered the vision, the Roman soldiers sent by Cornelius reached the house in Joppa and entreated Peter to accompany them back to Cornelius' house. Peter understood the vision given him by the Holy Spirit and agreed to go. Upon reaching Cornelius, **Acts 10:28-43** says:

28 Then [Peter] said to [Cornelius and his men], "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"

30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are



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remembered in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.’

33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God.”

34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ— He is Lord of all—

37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 And we are witnesses of all things which [Jesus] did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with [Jesus] after He arose from the dead.

42 And [Jesus] commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through [Jesus’] name, whoever believes in [Jesus] will receive remission of sins.”

So, just as Ruth, the Moabitess, decided to ignore the illegality of being a Moabite dwelling among the Jews and seek God by travelling to Israel with Naomi, Cornelius, the Roman, decided to ignore the exclusive Jewishness of the Church and seek God by calling for the Apostle Peter to come and preach to him. And God rewarded Cornelius for his faithfulness, as **Acts 10:44-48** records:

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

47 “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then



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they asked [Peter] to stay a few days.

Peter told Cornelius, in **Acts 10:43**:

43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through [Jesus'] name, whoever believes in [Jesus] will receive remission of sins."

And both Ruth and Cornelius teach us that there is no demographic characteristic, be it race, ethnic background, or national origin, that can separate a believer from God. And God Himself tells us, in **John 3:16-17**:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Salvation is not restricted to male or female, black or white, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, Oriental or Occidental, hawk or dove, Republican or Democrat. God is still saying, whosoever will, let him come. Jesus tells us, in **John 4:23-24**:

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

24 God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Worship is in Spirit and in Truth, not in a particular building, ethnicity, gender or political persuasion. And those that appear to be outside are always welcomed, by God, to come inside. The book of Ruth, like the episode of Cornelius, records the attempt of one that is outside seeking to come inside. One that wants to yield their spirit to the Spirit of God and follow the admonition of the Spirit to obey the Word of God. And God honors their efforts. Let those of us that are inside be as diligent to obey God as those on the outside that are seeking to get inside. And let us open the door for them and receive them with open arms.

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