

God's Faithfulness in the Book of Ruth

1. Introduction.
 - A. Read: **Ruth 4:18-22** - ¹⁸ **This, then, is the family line of Perez: Perez was the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, ²² Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David. [slide 1]**
 - B. We've been gleaning from the book of Ruth over the past couple of months, trying to take a magnifying glass to see some of what God is speaking to us from this book. Now, after all of the tragedy and hope, despair and celebration, drama and romance, we come to this conclusion - a genealogy?!
 - C. I've been part of the Navigators and they have memory verse packs, but I don't think this passage was in there. Would you put it in there? Probably not! Especially if you memorized the King James version: **Perez begat Hezron, Hezron begat Ram ... all the way to Jesse begat David**. The book of Ruth is a great story, but you think it is a little weak on the ending?
 - D. We said early on in this study that the author of this book was very skillful. The skill in story-telling shows up in the way he ends this book. You and I have been looking at details in this book and now the author is backing us out of the fields, out of Bethlehem, to a bigger picture. The author started us at the beginning of the book setting us in the time when the judges ruled. It was a time when Israel did as they saw fit, because there was no king. The author comes back to that beginning by saying there will be a king, King David. It was a part of God's plan all along. God had a purpose for a grieving widow, a Moabite foreigner, and a kind, giving farmer. God had given a promise hundreds of years ago to another man, and the book of Ruth is about God's faithfulness to fulfill that promise. And the book of Ruth is skillfully woven with allusions back to that promise, the promise God gave to Abraham.
2. The Promise.
 - A. **Genesis 17:1-8** God's covenant with Abraham.
 - (1). Jim read this passage at the beginning - display verses, highlight verse 1. **[slide 2]** LORD appears to Abram and says, **"I am God Almighty"**, El Shaddai.
 - a. God gives a revelation of himself. The name is El Shaddai. According to the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, El Shaddai is a progression of the revelation of God during the Patriarchal period. God is more than creator and sustainer of the

universe but is also the initiator and keeper of covenants. This fits in with what we looked at previously when we discussed God's providence. God will intervene in the human/physical arena to move things to spiritual ends.

b. Who are the patriarchs? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

Exodus 6:3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty... [slide 3] We read about the revelation to Abraham, what about Isaac, and Jacob?

- **Genesis 28:3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.** [slide 3] This is Isaac's blessing of Jacob before sending him away to get a wife. Isaac has had a revelation of El Shaddai and blesses Jacob with that revelation.

- **Genesis 35:11-12 And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body. ¹²The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.** [slide 3] The same revelation comes to Jacob when he comes back from getting two wives. The promise includes a nation, kings, and an inheritance of land.

c. The revelation of El Shaddai, God Almighty, was made to Abraham at what time of his life? When he was ninety-nine years of age. The revelation of being Almighty was needed when Abraham is being told that he is going to have a child with his wife Sarah, who is ninety years old. If I showed you a lineup of potential fathers, from about 20 to 100, who would pick the guy who looks to be 100 to be a father?

d. Back to **Ruth 1:20-21** ²⁰ **"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. ²¹ I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."**

[slide 4] the author ties Naomi's situation back to the situation with Abraham. Abraham has no son with Sarah yet. Naomi has lost her husband and two

sons. Both will come to know God as faithful to his revealed name: El Shaddai, God Almighty.

- (2). **Genesis 17:4-6** ⁴ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. **[slide 5 - highlighted]**
- a. Abram's initial call from God in Genesis 12 includes the promise of being made into a great nation. But to have a nation, you need children. Abraham needs a son. Naomi needs a son. God is faithful to both. He enables Sarah to have a son. **Genesis 21:1-2 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.** ²Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. **[slide 6]**
 - b. God also enables Ruth to conceive. **Ruth 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. Then he went to her, and the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. [slide 6]**
 - c. Both Sarah and Ruth have a desire for children. Yet back in the big picture, God is being faithful to his covenantal promise to Abraham. That promise goes from the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Judah mentioned in Ruth 4, to his son Perez, then on to the genealogy at the end of Ruth.
 - d. Who is at the end of the genealogy in Ruth 4? David! And what is David? A king! Kings have come from Abraham. And the promise will continue because through the line of David comes Jesus, Son of David, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The author of Ruth is guiding his Hebrew listeners back to the covenant of God with Abraham.
- (3). **Genesis 17:7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. [slide 7]**
- a. God's covenant not only defined what he would do for Abraham, but as we learn through the Old Testament, God's covenant defines our relationship to God and our relationships to each other.
 - **Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your county, your people and your**

father's household and go to the land I will show you. [slide 8] Abraham had to give up everything he knew to follow God. Similarity.

- **Ruth 1:16-17 Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God.**

¹⁷Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me. [slide 8] Doesn't this sound similar to Abraham? Abraham left the land he knew and became an alien in what would be the Promised Land. Ruth left Moab, the land of her people, the land whose god was Chemosh, to live as an alien in the Promised Land.

- b. God's covenant defines also how we live in relationship with each other. One word that we had mentioned a number of times through the book of Ruth is **hesed** – God's covenantal kindness. That kindness was shown by Ruth in her taking care of Naomi. Hesed was shown by Boaz toward Ruth. Not only did he bless Ruth and Naomi with food and protection. He displays God's hesed by his blessing in **Ruth 2:12 (on the bulletin front) May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge. [slide 9]** It is a very redemptive blessing. We have been discussing the genealogy of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob down to David, what about some of Ruth's?

- I'm not going to display most of the scripture references. But it starts again back with Abraham. He has a nephew Lot, who goes with Abraham (in Genesis 12) to the land where God was leading him.
- Genesis 13 has Lot and Abraham separating because they had too much cattle between them. Lot heads toward Sodom; Abraham goes the other direction.
- After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot in Genesis 19 has sought refuge in a cave with his two daughters. The oldest is concerned that there are no men up in the caves, so they get pregnant by their father, Lot.

The oldest has a child that she names Moab, where we get the Moabites.

- As the Israelites are going to the Promised Land, they have some difficulties with the Moabites. **Deuteronomy 23:3-4 No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. ⁴ For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. [slide 10]**
- Ruth could be treated badly by Boaz and others in Bethlehem. But Boaz shows hesed, God's covenantal kindness to the descendant of Lot. That kindness includes taking care of the poor, the alien, and the widow by leaving the extra grain for them. He also shows the covenantal kindness of the kinsman-redeemer, the **goel** that Bret spoke of last week. Boaz is demonstrating the kindness of his faithful God.

- (4). **Genesis 17:8a The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; ... [slide 11]**
- a. The promise to Abraham was not only to have descendants, but also to have a place to live, the Promised Land. God's faithfulness to Abraham is to show him the land. He continues that faithfulness to bring the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, back to that land.
 - b. The story-teller in the book of Ruth points out the prominence of the land. We see in Ruth 1 that Elimelech is from Bethlehem in Judah. Judah is not only one of the 12 sons of Jacob, but is also a territory in the Promised Land. The tribe of Judah receives an inheritance of land from God. Elimelech and his family leave that inheritance because of famine. Naomi and Ruth come back to that inheritance because in the midst of all their tragedy, Naomi hears that the LORD has come to the aid of his people by providing bread. Part of Naomi's ownership of the land is prominent in the transaction at the city gate with the kinsman-redeemer. God is faithful to provide the land.
- (5). **Genesis 17:8b And I will be their God. [slide 12]**

- a. Is it good to have a relationship with God just by ourselves? Or do we want to see our children following God also?
- b. The picture of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was a picture of a father directing his household after the LORD. God commends Abraham for this even before Abraham has his son Isaac in **Genesis 18:17-19** **Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? ¹⁸Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him." [slide 13]**
- c. We want our generations to follow God. The storyteller of Ruth was retelling the faithfulness of God to Abraham in the story of God's faithfulness to Boaz, Ruth, and Naomi. God's blessing in the big picture is bring the children also to a relationship with him. The genealogy in Ruth 4 ends with not only the name of a king, but the name of a man after God's own heart, a worshipper of God with the Psalms, David.
- d. We started the book of Ruth in the chaotic period of the Judges, when everyone did as he saw fit, and the people of Israel went back and forth in their relationship with God. But was God still at work? Was he still sovereign? Was he still participating with his creation through his providence? Yes. He was faithful to continue his promise to Abraham, which continues through to the promise of Christ. The book is an encouragement to the Jewish listeners to trust in Almighty God, El Shaddai; and to know that the covenantal promise and relationship made to Abraham was available to them today.

3. Application.

- A. We started with a genealogy.
 - (1). What kind of genealogy do you and I have?
 - a. If it is one like Ruth, of a people that left God like the Moabites, you can change that. God offers redemption in Christ. Romans gives a picture of wild olive tree branches grafted into the natural olive tree. Ruth the Moabitess was grafted back in to the people of Israel because she followed their God.

- b. If we are part of the covenant, are we sharing God's hesed in our family? Are we being the example for our children and our children's children? Genealogies involve time. In the family, that relationship with God shows up in our everyday activities; the traditions we share; the vacations we take. Will they look back and see in their genealogy a Boaz, an Isaac, or a Ruth? [Grandson Zach visited yesterday, little over 4 months old. What will he see of me? Will he be more willing to trust God's faithfulness, because he saw God's faithfulness displayed in my life. Will he come to know the revelation of El Shaddai, or the revelation of Christ that I have known?]
 - c. Genealogy is not limited to natural family lines. I can look back at the spiritual fathers and mothers that have had an impact on my life. Am I willing to be one also?
 - B. We did a lot of comparisons between God's covenant with Abraham and the God's activity in the book of Ruth. We see the faithfulness of God to provide a son and a nation to Abraham, to provide an inheritance of land for that nation, and the faithfulness of keeping a covenant and relationship with that nation. The writer of the book added a lot more similarities that we haven't discussed. But we do see, that in the midst of the trees of the book of Ruth, is a forest of God's plan for a people culminating in the genealogy that leads to Christ.
- 4. Closing Verse.
 - A. **Hebrews 12:1-2a Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...**