

Ruth Cell Notes - Steve Dunn 9/5/10

Providence: God at work:

God never needs a back-up plan. He's never taken by surprise:

Deism = separates God/creation (not involved)

Pantheism = mixes the 2 together & confuses where God begins/ends (so how is He involved?)

Fate = elusive/ fairytale/ personifies "destiny"

Chance (the god of evolution!) = "*everything's an accident*" (I'M NOT! NEITHER ARE YOU!)

Our God is the Creator Who still cares & is involved & has no back-up plan. When it looks like a lost cause He's not hastily coming up with another idea. He cares/ sustains/ provides.

All levels: *general* (sustains everything; upholds, **Heb 1.3**); *within that* (makes grass to grow **Ps 104.14**, provides food for animals in season **Ps 104.27**, sends the rain **Matt 5.45**, puts gvt's in place **Rom 13.1**, gives life in the womb **Ps 127.3**); then even more specifically: also **Rom 8.28**. (Now see **Ruth 2.3**: "*happened to come...*")

Did God CAUSE the famine? Look at **Ps 105.16-17** about His providence in Joseph's story. And here, God used a FAMINE to draw Ruth into His Son's bloodline. Why? Will look at that later...

Ruth: an amazing woman:

While still young, had to deal with infertility PLUS widowhood within 10 years of marriage (**v4**)

She CLUNG to Naomi (**v14**) – same verb used in **Gen 2.24** (ESV - "*hold fast*"; NIV - "*be united*") = binding, exclusive. It declares that future abandonment WILL NOT HAPPEN. See also **Dt 10.20** - "*Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name.*"

Ruth, the Moabitess, ex-idolater (**1.15** "and to her gods"), is demonstrating the very devotion God asks of His own people. She means this for life (**v17**). She's determined that the bitter blows she's been dealt will not defeat her. She saw the hope that God can bring – witnessed in the lives of her husband's family. Thus Ruth refused to allow bitterness seep into her heart.

Ruth's character is exemplary – she is:

- **Faithful** - **1.6-22** (particularly **15-18**)
- **Takes initiative** (**2.2**) – isn't just some door mat who does what she's told.
- **Respectful** (**2.10 & 13** ("*bowing*", "*my lord*")
- **Humble** (**2.7, 10 & 13** again) - doesn't lean on her rights as a sojourner (**Lev 19.9-10**) but on Boaz's favour. Today, our whole culture is rights over responsibility! Ruth ends up in a BETTER place as a result of her humility (**2.15**)! And then better than THAT (**2.16**)!
- **Her reputation precedes her** (**2.11**)
- **Hard-working** (**2.17**)
- **Patient** (**2.23**) – some time before the next step!
- **Sticks by her word** (**2.27b**: "*lived with her mother-in-law*")
- **Teachable** (takes Naomi's advice to the letter: **3.1-5**). *Were do you get advice from? From those who say what you need to hear? Or those who say what you want to hear?*
- **Kind** (**3.10**) = *hesed* = same word used to describe God's covenanted love-faithfulness to His people. Boaz uses it in describing how she has looked after her mum-in-law, and now come to *him* as a preferable future, rather than a younger, eligible man.
- **Self-controlled** – lying at Boaz's feet may not have been the most appropriate of ideas! Very risky. Alone! At night! (**3.13-14** = all night, rising just before dawn!). However, her (and Boaz's) self-control is quite phenomenal (not a recommended option for unmarried couples, by the way...)

... It was all enough to make quite an impact on Boaz. His 1st impression of her was outstanding. Her *character* sang out. **Proverbs 31**: ABC's of womanly excellence: can be depressing unless properly understood = an ideal, covers all aspects. Then we see Ruth... And her CHARACTER wooed him. (something for men to learn from too!). *What would be people's most likely 1st impression of you?*

Is she too perfect? An unattainable role model? NO. Why? Because she's human and she's real. So what's her secret? Because she vowed to "*hold fast*" to Naomi and to God. She took that vow seriously. **A challenge for us all.**

A more amazing God!:

Moab = modern-day Jordan. Moabites - descendants of Lot AND HIS DAUGHTER - worshipped Chemosh (incl human sacrifice). Moabites were not specifically forbidden in marriage, **Dt 7.3**, BUT not allowed into worshipping congregation, **Dt 23.3**

Called "Ruth the Moabite" right up to her marriage: twice in ch1, three times in ch2, and twice in ch4. Emphasises that God's kindness extends BEYOND Israel - now see **4.10** = acquired as Boaz's WIFE, to maintain MAHLON's name thru property/deeds. Ruth also calls her *daughter* in **3.1**. Israel have a position not of privilege but of mission - remember our purpose statement series when we looked @ Abraham - it was always God's intention to save the **nations** not a singular nation. So, here we see Ruth welcomed into HIS people as ONE OF HIS OWN. Why? Partly for this reason: foreign blood in Christ's veins!!!!!!!

She was a foreigner & an idolatress (**1.15**) and yet God drew her into his Son's bloodline (Matt = 5 women incl Mary, 2 of which - Rahab and Ruth = non-Jews) = means that Christ not only came FOR the nations but **FROM** the nations too!!!!

Now look at **4.11-12**: Prophesied over: see Crossway pp70-71: like Rachel & Leah (elaborate) and their hse like that of Perez (elaborate too - re **v18**).

Conclusion:

The overall EARTHLY goal of Ruth's story/Naomi's intentions = to find Ruth a home (**1.9, 3.1**)... The overall HEAVENLY goal of Ruth's story: to bring humanity home to the Father thru His Son.

This story is about life from death: God the Father, in His Providence, brought life out of famine, out of infertility, out of death. Christ, the most marked result of this story, has done the same for us in His death & resurrection. What happened to Ruth has happened to us: **Eph 2.11-13**. We've been rescued from dead beliefs, from dead works, from death itself, into LIFE itself, by Christ Himself! Just like Ruth, we have been redeemed - rescued, delivered, saved.

The main point? That no matter how exemplary you are - even as much a man or woman of integrity as Ruth - we are still only **saved by His grace**. Ruth's high standards and faithfulness did not make up for her past, did not crowbar her into God's kingdom. God's providence did that. Her grandstanding speech, as much as it is a remarkable open commitment to Naomi, pointed the way to HIM - this is a prayer of commitment to the One Who is behind it all. HE drew her in. HE called her. HE saved her. And He is calling you too. Nothing you say or do will change your past. Only He can do that. Not chance, not fate, Not an amoebic pantheistic god, not an absent or dead god. Only the True God, the God of providence. Seek Him first.

Cell Q's:

1. Look again at Psalm 105.16-17 about God's involvement in natural disasters.
 - o Is this difficult for you?
 - o How do we find comfort in this?
 - o What would the world say?
 - o What should be our answer?
2. Ruth was teachable and humble.
 - o Where do you get your advice/counsel from?
 - o How can we encourage more accountability, counsel amongst our Beacon family?