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**Coming to God:** by Ben M.

## **Ruth 4**

We are looking at the genealogy of David at the end of the book of Ruth. This book describes a family who left the Promised Land because of famine and went to Moab. Tragically, the husband and two grown sons died. The famine eased and Naomi returned to the Land with Ruth, one of her daughters-in-law. They were poverty stricken but by God's grace Ruth met an influential and wealthy land-owner named Boaz. He took Ruth under his wing and married her. They had a son named Obed, the ancestor of David and Solomon.

**Recognise what God has done:** This book is important to Solomon because it is about legitimacy. Ruth started out without any apparent rights but she was grafted into the people of God and became a fully-fledged integral part of the people of God. She became an ancestor of David himself. There are questions about Solomon's legitimacy. He was the child of the most controversial couple (David and Bathsheba) in the whole of the Old Testament. His own many marriages were in contravention of the word of God. Also, there were eight elder sons of David who were closer in line to the throne. In the midst of all this controversy God brought people near who appeared to be afar off making them his own. The names in Solomon's genealogy are famous national heroes. Solomon is saying, 'King David is my father and here is the proof'. Interestingly, there are all sorts of controversial unions recorded in this list. Strangely this list starts with Perez. (4:8) The people blessed Ruth (4:12) saying, "Let your family be like that of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah". Tamar was the widow of Er, one of Judah's sons. His brother Onan refused to obey the law and marry Tamar so that there would be a child born to the name of Er. Onan died later under God's judgement. Tamar dressed up as a prostitute and seduced her father-in-law who became the father of Perez. Judah recognised that Tamar was more righteous than he was because he should have given her more support. It was a controversial beginning but God was in it. The descendants of Perez were remarkable, illustrious men. They were war heroes (like Churchill and Mountbatten) who won the battle for Canaan. The great military commander Salmon married Rahab the prostitute from Jericho who saved the Israelite spies. Their son was Boaz. God used these controversial relationships. Even David was controversial. He was hunted by King Saul for many years as number one enemy of the state. David became king over Judah unsupported by the rest of Israel. He took the wife of the upright man Uriah who was killed at David's command. Even though he was surrounded by controversy God used David. God used all these eyebrow-raising people for his glory. The exact same genealogy is part of the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:3-6). But God was at work. All these people contributed to the genealogy of the Messiah himself. Jesus is a man surrounded by controversy. God saw people like Tamar and Rahab, (Canaanite) Ruth (Moabite) and Bathsheba who were afar off but God brought them near and used them for his glory. Think of all the questions about Mary an unwed young woman pregnant with God's son. God used her for his glory. People on the outside were brought near and in-grafted by the work of the Spirit. All these people became one with the people of God.

We've been listening to Paul's testimony. God knows who is on the outside and he knows how to bring us in. In spite of all sorts of difficulties and controversies, when God purposes, he grafts you in. This is a baptism service where we recognise what God has done. If God has cleansed and forgiven you, who are we to withhold

anything from you? One of the strengths of adult baptism is that you may not remember the day or the hour of your conversion but the day of your baptism you will not forget. Baptism is a joyous proclamation of what the Lord had done.

**Celebrate Christ our Kinsman-Redeemer:** The book of Ruth gives us an active testimony of the work of the 'Kinsman-Redeemer' (4:14). There are several sections of law (Leviticus 25:48-49; Deuteronomy 40:25-25; Numbers 5:8; 35:9-8) that outline the duties and responsibilities of a kinsman-redeemer. God established this social welfare system for people in trouble. Your nearest relative must stand up and take responsibility for you when you're in trouble. Unlike Onan who refused to give children to Tamar, Boaz (means powerful & wealthy) is the single example in the Old Testament of a willing kinsman-redeemer doing what the kinsman-redeemer is called to do: paying your debts, standing up for us when we are in trouble, fulfilling a need. All of us are in debt to God because we have fallen short of God's glory. We have a moral deficit. If anyone thinks he can repay this debt himself he will soon realise things only get worse and worse. We have someone who will step in for us and say, 'I will pay'. Jesus has taken on flesh so becoming our kinsman. He is powerful and rich enough not just to pay your debts but the debts of everybody else who will turn to him and trust him. He's the one who says, 'My neighbour is the one who is in need.' and he is willing to pay to God's satisfaction. The payment required is the very life-blood of Jesus our ultimate kinsman-redeemer. He stood up and said 'I will pay' so making Paul (and all believers) free to walk before God.

**Confession, repentance, faith and commitment:** Ruth is the embodiment of loving faithfulness. She stuck with Naomi through thick and thin. She was better than seven sons. (4:15) Ruth came under the influence of the faithful God who never forsakes us, the God who said 'It is finished'. The fruit of the spirit is so evident in Ruth's life. She trusted Christ. We have heard the beginning of Ruth's journey of faithfulness. (1:16-17) We have heard Paul's declaration of commitment to faithfulness to our Lord Jesus, to take on his name by baptism. We have all served other gods but today we've witnessed a public confession of turning from other gods and from sin, a commitment to serve the Lord Jesus Christ for the rest of Paul's life. 'If he is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all.'