

## ***CALLING ON HEAVEN, RUTH 3***

Sacred Romance #3

◆**Intro:** A gem dealer was strolling the aisles at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show when he noticed a blue-violet stone the size and shape of a potato. He looked it over, then as calmly as possible, asked the vendor, “You want \$15 for *this*?” The seller, realizing the rock wasn’t as pretty as others in the bin lowered the price to \$10. The stone has since been certified as a 1,905-carat natural star sapphire, about 800 carats larger than the largest stone of it’s kind. It was appraised at \$2.28 million! It took the lover of stones to recognize the sapphire’s worth, just as the Lover of Souls sees is the one who sees value in ordinary-looking people like us.

◆“And now God is building you, as living stones, into his spiritual temple. What’s more, you are God’s holy priests, who offer the spiritual sacrifices that please him because of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 2:5, NLT.

◆So far in this short story of sacred romance we have observed two universal spiritual laws. In chapter one, Naomi and her family left Bethlehem, the “House of Bread” and began a descent into emptiness as they walked away from Gods land, and in certain degrees, away from him, although they remained followers of the true God. In the enemy territory of Moab things went from bad to worse as Naomi’s husband died, her two sons married pagan foreigners, and then died as well. Naomi, left with no status, no rights, no citizenship, and no descendants decides to return to Bethlehem. This can serve as an illustration of Spiritual Law #1 which says “human beings are sinful and therefore separated from God.” We all have bailed on God to some degree. We all are stained with sin and are missing

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the fulness that can only be found in connection with the God of the universe.

◆Chapter two found Naomi back home accompanied by Ruth whose most famous words of love and dedication were “Don’t ask me to leave you. Where you go, I’ll go. Where you stay, I’ll stay. Your people will be my people and your God will be my God...” This extraordinary woman displayed an extraordinary, self-less love that was and is precisely representative of the love God has for his human creature. Spiritual Law #2 tells us that God indeed loves his fallen creatures and freely plans full things for them; beautiful, wonderful life. Perhaps the most amazing parallel we find in the Book of Ruth is between her and the progeny that would come from her own blood line, namely the Messiah. Both Ruth and Christ left their home, their father and family. Both headed for the same place, Bethlehem, for someone else’s benefit. Both lived out the love of our Father in Heaven to bring fullness to others.

◆**1. The Disjunction.** Now maybe you notice a disjunction between the first two spiritual laws: on the one hand God *delights* in us. God *wants* to give us life and fullness, and joy; on the other hand, our sinfulness and our sinning actually serve to separate us from experiencing God and his full love. What can solve the dilemma between these two spiritual laws? Where do I get the power to stop my sinning? How do I find recompense for the wrong already done and within me? In short, how do I get “redeemed”? To be redeemed is to be purchased back again. Chapter 3 holds the answer and as we shall see, two more of the so-called “Four Spiritual Laws.”

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◆**In order to experience fullness, I need an active relationship with my redeemer.** I'd like to spell out a few things about this definition a minute.

◆A. First of all, when we say “experience fullness” we are referring to not only what we will experience after this life is over, in the perfection of the gift of heaven, but we are referring also to the joy and awareness that we actually can live in on this side of heaven. I'm talking about spiritual qualities like 1) the ability to be satisfied in whatever state of wealth, or health you might find yourself. I'm talking about 2) peace in the soul, as opposed to constant questioning, fear, and anxiety. I'm talking about having that 3) sense of founded love that enables a young person, or an old person for that matter, to chose moral integrity, to deny the urges of the self that so often destroy us, and to do high, noble, and selfless things. Experiencing these things are not contingent upon who gets elected president, or what side of town you were born on, or what race you are. These things come as a result of an active relationship with your redeemer. Galatians 5 tells us that love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness –are fruits of the Spirit of God. Since life comes by the Spirit, says Paul, lets keep in step with the Spirit.

◆B. Secondly in our definition you will notice the word “active”. Many times people come to a point in their lives where they acknowledge the reality of God and his authority over the universe. Naomi certainly knew him. Ruth learned it undoubtedly from Naomi and her family! But we run into people all the time who are aware of God, but not interacting with God on a daily basis. Such folk often wonder why

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God doesn't seem to show up more, or why their praying feels empty and unanswered, or why they still have all the stress that the unbelievers around them also have. They discover that material blessing alone does not fill the soul.

◆ In chapter 3:1 Naomi captures this. She asks Ruth “should I not try to find rest for you.” Some translations use the word “home” but it's more than that. It's the security, the hope, the fulness that a home is symbolic of. Naomi and Ruth have food, and a source of provision. But they are still widows, they are still without legal rights in their current culture. They are still in need. Boaz's kindness has fed them, but they need a future and a hope! They need the hope of progress.

◆ And maybe that's where some of us are as well. We know God. We have accepted his promise of heaven by repenting of our sins. But we still have to live life and life is still hard. The kids still all talk at once. You still have to teach them not to eat things for money or to play in the street. We still do things we regret with surprising regularity. We need more than grain and bread. We need a rest and a home, a hope, or we may wind up in the rest-home earlier than we hoped! We need a solution to the first two spiritual laws: God loves us, but we are separated from God's full love!

### **◆2. The Solution:**

◆ A. We saw it in Chapter 2:20. We read in 3:9. Naomi recognizes that Boaz is a “Kinsman-redeemer” (*goel*) What's that? Well, according to Leviticus 25 if an Israelite came on hard times, say, blew his business dealings, had a crop failure, had to file bankruptcy or something and sell off

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his property, or even himself, to pay bad debts, the “Goel” or near relative (next of kin) maintained the legal right of coming to your aid and ransoming you or your property. (In the OT, God is called Israel’s “goel”.) A little background: selling land in Israel was never for keeps. Only for a period of time. It was always to stay in the name of the original family. So buying someone else’s land was more like renting, or buying use-rights for a period of years. Every 50 years land would automatically revert to the original family. But land *could* always go back to the original family immediately through a kinsman-redeemer (*Goel*). The kinsman-redeemer reserved the right at anytime to bail out the family member and buy the land back whether it was for sale or not. In the Book of Ruth, Boaz acts as Kinsman-Redeemer who buys Naomi’s family land back for her and her family name. (cf 4:9-10)

◆B. There is a second provision for destitute families in Israel that seems to have been connected, at least by tradition, to the “Goel”, or redeemer of land. Deuteronomy 25 provided what is called the Levirate marriage: if a husband died, the next of kin brother would marry the widow to raise up a son *to the brother’s name and property*. The Levirate husband did not lay claim to the property. It was his selfless service to his brother.

◆ [Lets pause here a moment. Do you notice something special in these two provisioning laws of Lev.25 and Deut. 25? In Israel, names didn’t die out. People and families were considered important before God and not mere accidents of time. The dead were not seen as some amorphous cloud of angelic ghosts, but as real, named individuals about whom their God continues to care. Hence the title

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of Lord of the “Living and the Dead”, right? Naomi uses the phrase of Boaz’s graciousness in 2:20 where she sees Boaz’s kindness as a kindness to dead Elimelech and sons as well as to her and Ruth.

◆We learn something here.

◆1) People are eternal individual beings and as such are worth being bought back by God their creator. We ought not to suspect that when we die and join God that we become a nameless being without history or unique significance. We are each valuable stones in the eye to the gem creator.

◆2) God is a redeemer. He even worked redemption into the society of his people in OT Israel. ] All this brings us to the second main lesson of Ruth chapter 3 raises in light of the rest of scripture...

◆2. **Spiritual Law #3: Jesus died as the only payment for mankind’s sins and return us to relationship with God.** Jesus is my only kinsman-redeemer.

◆*“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” Hebrews 2:14-17, NIV.*

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◆A. As a redeemer, Boaz typifies Christ and his redemption of us. Jesus is our kinsman who steps in to bail us out, even after we've bailed out on God.

◆1Tim:2:5-6 *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a **ransom** for all men.*

◆Eph 1:7 In him we have **redemption** through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

◆**3. Spiritual Law #4: I must ask Jesus to be my savior and Lord.** Put it another way, I need to ask him to be my kinsman-redeemer. Again we use a couple of significant terms: “savior and Lord”. Asking Christ to be your savior is accepting his payment for your sins. His merit is given to God and saves your life from death. Asking Christ to be your Lord or “Boss” is accepting his rule and direction for how you live. It is affirming that to live in that salvation, and to continue to experience it from day to day, you are willing to live with him, to live his ways, and to seek relationship.

◆A. Ruth is our example again. She goes to Boaz and asks him to be her kinsman-redeemer (3:9) Boaz wasn't obligated to step forward and redeem the widows. They had to ask. Ruth's request is essentially a marriage proposal and a request for land-redemption at the same time. Ruth says literally in Hebrew, “spread your wings over me.” There is one other place in scripture that uses the same words and imagery. Look. Speaking to his people as a lover, God says...

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◆ *““Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment (wings) over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine.” Ezekiel 16:8, NIV.*

◆ There is also a play of words here. Earlier Boaz pointed out that Ruth has come to take shelter under the “wings” of YHWH (2:12) Ruth is reminding him of this and basically saying, “Be God’s wings for me.”

◆ B. In a similar way, to enter into a saving relationship with God, you and I must go to him and ask him to be our redeemer. It does not automatically happen because you are born and you die. All dogs don’t just go to heaven. You must chose to receive his love in your life both on an eternal level, and then on a daily level to experience the reality of what he gives you.

◆ “And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it

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was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” Acts 2:21-24, NIV.

◆Here again is the vast importance of each individual soul. We don’t get saved by fiat. You don’t get God’s interaction much less salvation because you know people who serve him, or because you haven’t rejected him. Your heart must indeed desire God in your life and invite him into it as savior and ruler.

◆*““Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends.” Revelation 3:20, NLT.*

◆Now while this clearly applies to becoming a member of God’s family, it also applies to spiritual transformation. Spiritual transformation does not just happen, you have to seek it.

◆“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13, NIV.

◆Yet so many think that because they “believe in God” they are secure, or are doing all they can to receive a new and changed life. Try saying that to you mechanic who tells you there is too much play in your balljoints, or your valve lash. Can you say, “Oh my car will be fine because I believe in fine tuned joints and valves.” Try saying “well, I believe” to your doctor. He says, “You need to exercise and lower your cholesterol.” You respond, “Oh but I believe in good health already.”

◆The growth of the soul is not unlike improving your golf game. Anyone who has ever played golf knows that you don’t improve it by merely playing

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a lot of golf. In fact, because this is the case they have a whole system of handicap measurements basically so that players at one level who never get any better, can compete with players at another level, who likewise never get any better. The old adage is not so true. Practice does not make perfect. Practice makes permanent. To be made perfect requires correction and guidance. Are you willing to seek assistance? Are you willing to ask for redemption?

◆**Conclusion:** Listen friends, 1) you and I do have the problem of sinfulness. 2) God does love us and want our good. 3) Jesus is the only savior and can change your life. 4) But we do have to chose him and then keep in step (keep choosing) to experience that change in this fallen world. As long as we're at it, lets put it in golfing terms, shall we? 1) you and I have a huge handicap and stink at golf. 2) God owns the course and wants us to enjoy it. 3) Jesus is the only pro who can grant you a membership **and** improve your game. 4) If you ask him he'll give you not only membership rights, but also lessons. But you have to ask. Ask. Ask every day of your life. Ask, call, seek

◆““Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”  
Matthew 7:7, 8, NIV.