

Ruth's Wedding and the Timing of the Rapture

T.W. Tramm – (09/05/21)

THE WEDDING OF RUTH to Boaz is believed to be a typological picture of the Rapture, the wedding of the Church to Messiah.

While Scripture does not say exactly when the wedding occurred, an important clue is that Ruth lived with her mother-in-law until the end of the wheat harvest:

“Ruth ... gathered grain until all the barley and wheat had been harvested, all the while living with her mother-in-law” (Ruth 2:23).

One translation specifies that Ruth lived with her mother-in-law until all the barley and the wheat were “laid up in the barns” (v. 23 DRB).

That Ruth lived with her mother-in-law until all the wheat was harvested and, perhaps, even stored in the barns means she was not living with Boaz as his wife before this time.

It makes sense that Boaz would not marry Ruth until the harvest was complete because, as the owner of the field in which she was gleaning, he would have been busy overseeing the processing of the wheat. While Boaz was a man of wealth and standing, he was known to supervise the threshing of the grain in his barn. It was normal practice in those days for landowners to stay on the threshing floor during the harvest, even at night, as a deterrent to theft. This is why Boaz is found sleeping on the threshing floor when Ruth comes to petition him to redeem her by marriage (Ruth 3:9–11).

The wheat harvest did not end with the threshing and winnowing. The grain had to be measured, portions meted out as various payments or tithes, and the rest stored up in barns. Thus, Boaz's life could have centered on the threshing floor for a period of months until all of this work was complete.

When would Boaz's work have ended so he could partake in a wedding feast with his betrothed? Since the harvest of the second wheat crop, the spring-planted wheat, typically extends into late summer or early fall, it is conceivable Boaz may have been tied up with the harvest throughout the sixth biblical month, corresponding to September.

A wedding around the six month would correspond typologically to the wedding of the Church and Messiah after 6,000 years and may explain the significance of the six measures of barley Boaz gives Ruth on the threshing floor the night before their betrothal (Ruth 3:15).

The betrothal, when Boaz publicly declared his intent to take Ruth as his wife, likely occurred on or around Pentecost in late spring (Ruth 4:9, 10). Seeing that Jewish weddings traditionally occur in stages—a betrothal followed months later by the consummation—a spring betrothal would make late summer or early fall an ideal time for the pair to consummate the marriage and begin living together.

Of course, all this is speculation. While we have clues and common sense to go on, there is no way to know exactly when the typological wedding occurred. Nonetheless, it is thrilling to consider the possibility it could have been the waning days of summer or onset of fall—the time we are in now!

NOTES:

1. Scripture specifies that Ruth lived with her mother-in-law until “all” the wheat was harvested (Ruth 2:23). There are two wheat crops during the year. Winter wheat is planted in fall or early winter and harvested in spring or early summer. A second wheat crop, spring wheat, is planted in spring and harvested in late summer and early fall.
2. In Jewish tradition, the betrothal meant the woman was legally married but remained living in her parents’ home. The wedding, occurring up to a year later, is when the betrothed woman moved out of her parents’ home into the house of the groom, at which time the marriage was consummated.
3. The sixth biblical month, Elul, is known as the month of the bride. The bridal theme derives from the fact that the name Elul is an acronym for the phrase spoken by the maiden in the Song of Solomon, *ani ledodi vedodi li*, meaning “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine.” Significantly, the passages depicting the maiden awaiting or in the presence of her beloved mention apples and grapes—fruits harvested during the month of Elul (Song 2:3-5, 13).
4. According to the rabbis, Ruth and Boaz were 40 and 80 years of age, respectively, when they married. The numbers 40 and 80 add up to 120, the number of jubilees in a 6,000-year period.