

Ruth's Wedding and the Timing of the Rapture

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A POPULAR view among Christians is that the wedding of Ruth to Boaz foreshadows the joining of the Church to Messiah at the Rapture.

Scripture doesn't reveal the exact time of Ruth and Boaz's typological wedding. However, an important clue to the season is that Ruth lived with her mother-in-law, Naomi, until the end of the wheat harvest:

"[Boaz told Ruth] to come back and stay with his harvesters until the entire harvest is completed So Ruth worked with them and gathered grain until all the barley and wheat had been harvested, all the while living with her mother-in-law" (Ruth 2:21, 23).

That Ruth lived with her mother-in-law until the "entire" wheat harvest was complete means she didn't marry and move into Boaz's home before this time.

Another reason Ruth and Boaz wouldn't have cohabited before the harvest was complete is that Boaz, the owner of the field in which Ruth was gleaning, would have been preoccupied with overseeing the gathering and processing of the wheat. Although Boaz was a prince of the people, a mighty man of wealth and standing, he was known to personally supervise the threshing of the grain in his barn. It was normal practice in those days for landowners and farmers to not leave the threshing floor during the harvest—even at night—as a deterrent to theft. This is why Boaz is seen making the threshing floor his bed when Ruth first comes to visit (Ruth 3).

The harvest didn't end with the threshing and winnowing. The wheat had to be measured, portions had to be meted out as various payments or tithes, and the rest stored. Thus, Boaz's life would have revolved around the threshing floor for a period of months, until all of the work was complete.

When would Boaz's role as overseer be finished so he could leave the threshing floor and take up residence with his new wife, Ruth? Assuming "all" of the wheat harvest mentioned in Ruth chapter 2 includes the spring wheat—the grain planted in the spring and harvested in late summer—Boaz could easily have been tied up with the harvest through the sixth biblical month, Elul, corresponding to September.

Ruth and Boaz's wedding occurring in the six month harmonizes typologically with the wedding of the Church to Messiah after 6,000 years and may explain in part the significance of the six measures of barley Boaz gave to Ruth when she visited him on the threshing floor (Ruth 3:15).

Additionally interesting is the fact that, according to the rabbis, Ruth and Boaz were 40 and 80 years of age respectively at the time they were married. The numbers 40 and 80 add up to 120, the number of jubilees contained in a 6,000-year period.

The number 120 also points to Pentecost, the harvest festival on which Jews traditionally read the Book of Ruth each year. Scripture records that there were 120 believers gathered in an upper room on Pentecost morning when the Holy Spirit was poured out and the Church was “betrothed” to God (Acts 2). Israel was likewise betrothed to God on Pentecost morning at Sinai (Ex. 19).

Some believe that Ruth and Boaz’s “morning betrothal,” when Boaz publicly declared his intent to take the Gentile maid as his wife, occurred on or around Pentecost (Ruth 3:13-18; 4:1-10). Seeing that Jewish weddings traditionally occur in stages—a betrothal followed by the consummation months or years later—a betrothal on or around Pentecost would make late summer/early fall, about 3-4 months afterward, an ideal time for the pair to consummate the marriage and start living together.

Does the season of Ruth and Boaz’s wedding portend the season of the Church’s wedding to Messiah?

An indication that it may is the fact that the other main typology in the Story of Ruth, the redemption of the Jewish Naomi’s land, points to the season of fulfillment. Naomi, representing Israel, came home to redeem her land in the spring, around the beginning of the barley harvest (Ruth 1:22). As it happens, it was during the spring, around the time of the barley harvest in 1948, that the Jews “came home” with the intention of realizing the age-old dream of redeeming the Land of Israel.

Scripture teaches that there is an appointed season for everything (Ecc. 3:1).

While the date of Ruth’s wedding and certainly the Church’s are, for now, unknowable, the late summer/early fall seems a plausible season for both.

NOTES:

1. “[Ruth] kept close to the maids of Boaz: and continued to glean with them, till *all the barley and the wheat were laid up in the barns*” (2:23 DRB).

2. From the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948: “We appeal to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream—the redemption of Israel.”
<https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/peace/guide/pages/declaration%20of%20establishment%20of%20state%20of%20israel.aspx>

3. The entire summer harvest season, the period intervening the spring and fall festivals, may be seen as representing the Church Age. The Church Age began with the “betrothal,” via the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost 2,000 years ago. The Church Age will end with Jesus coming to gather the bride on a day no one knows, possibly around the conclusion of the agricultural wheat harvest. Harvesting the Church at the end of the wheat season symbolically allows the most possible time for believers to mature or “ripen.”

4. The sixth biblical month, Elul, is considered an auspicious time for weddings in Judaism.