

Rapture Prequels

RUTH

In the Book of Ruth, a citizen from Bethlehem named Elimilech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons move to Moab during a famine. The boys marry Moabite girls, but soon both father and sons die, leaving three widows.

Naomi returns to Bethlehem, accompanied by one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth. Naomi has lost everything and is destitute. She sends Ruth out to glean behind the reapers during the barley harvest.

In the providence of God, Ruth gleans barley in a field owned by Boaz - a near kinsman of Elimilech. At their first meeting Boaz falls in love with Ruth. Upon learning of this, Naomi begins planning for the wedding. She sends Ruth to Boaz to request of him to fulfill his responsibility as a kinsman redeemer.

The word kinsman, or relative, occurs twelve times in the Book of Ruth. It is the Hebrew word go'el, more completely translated "kinsman-redeemer." An Israelite could sell himself, his family, or his land in cases of extreme hardship or poverty. The go'el was the nearest living male blood relative. He was responsible, under Jewish law, to act as a redeemer of the mortgaged property and persons. He was the kinsman who could redeem what was lost, the kinsman-redeemer.

Boaz was a near relative to Ruth's deceased father and her deceased husband. He was a kinsman-redeemer. He took their courtship into court to clear the legal obstacles standing in the way of him exercising his responsibilities as kinsman-redeemer.

Seeking her love, Boaz claimed Ruth as her kinsman-redeemer. Seeing his love, Ruth claimed Boaz as her kinsman-redeemer. The story ends joyfully with a baby being born in Bethlehem.

But that is not the end of the story! Centuries later a descendant of Boaz and Ruth was born in Bethlehem. He was Jesus, born in Bethlehem of the virgin Mary. His miraculous birth made Jesus your kinsman. He is your kinsman-redeemer, able to purchase you out of slavery to sin and death. Seeking your love, Jesus came from Heaven to earth and claimed you as your kinsman-redeemer. Seeing His love, you come to Jesus and claim Him as your kinsman-redeemer.

This story becomes all the more precious when you see deeper connections with Ruth. Ruth was a Gentile girl, cut off from Israel, who was brought into a place of blessing as a bride. In the New Testament book of Ephesians, you see that this was precisely your condition!

You are Gentiles who were cut off from Israel:

Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh...

Ephesians 2:12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

You have been brought into a place of blessing as a bride:

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...

Ephesians 5:32 ...This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Ruth becomes typically, then, a picture of God's dealings with Gentiles during the time of Jewish apostasy between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. The family of Elimilech, departing from the land of Israel, is a picture of Israel being scattered throughout the world after having rejected Jesus in His first coming. Ruth was brought into blessing during their scattering. So it is that the Church is brought into blessing during this interval, prior to the second coming of the Lord.

The position of the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament is important. It is not accidental that the Book of Ruth appears after Judges and before First Samuel. Judges tells of the failure of the Jews under the Law of Moses,

and First Samuel tells of the setting up of Israel's kingdom under King David.

Between the failure of the Jews under the Law and their great king, Ruth is blessed as the Gentile bride. Just so today, the Church is blessed as the bride of Christ between the failure of Israel under the Law and the return of Jesus as their great King to establish His Kingdom on earth.

Salvation goes forth to Ruth, a Gentile, during a time of failure in Israel. This is typical of the age of grace in which we live. The Book of Acts ends with Israel rejecting Jesus and Paul saying, in Acts 28:28, "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

Ruth was brought to Israel at the beginning of the barley harvest. This would be the time of Firstfruits, the celebration of the first of the harvest. Firstfruits speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was the firstfruits of many who would be saved during this age in which we live. Just as Gentile Ruth was brought to the place of blessing at Firstfruits, so the Church is brought to the place of blessing thanks to the resurrection of Jesus as the firstfruits.

Commentators say that the Book of Ruth is read by the Jews at their Feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was fulfilled in the New Testament when the Church was born. Thus even the Jews, without knowing it, celebrate the harvest of the Gentiles into the Church by reading Ruth during Pentecost.

Threshing in Bible times was the harvest-time activity by which the grain was removed from the husk and the tares (or false grain) was separated from the wheat. The threshing floor was the place where this activity took place.

The threshing floor was flat and hardened by the passing of oxen over the sheaves, sometimes pulling a sled designed to separate the grain from the husks. After the threshing process, the stalks and grain were thrown up into the air so that the wind might blow the unwanted chaff away and leave the valuable kernels. This was known as winnowing.

The threshing floor is a place of blessing. It was the place where the grain of the harvest was actually taken from the sheaves. As such, it was a place where the blessing was received. The Bible refers to "the increase of the threshingfloor" (Numbers 18:30) and to a time when "the floors shall be full of wheat" (Joel 2:24).

It is also a picture of judgment. This is seen in Matthew 3:12, "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." At the time of threshing, the wheat is separated from the chaff and the tares. Also, the sheaves are beaten or crushed in order to make the separation. All of this is seen as a picture of judgment.

Micah 4:12 tells how the Lord will gather the nations "as the sheaves into the floor." The picture of judgment is very clear.

The threshing floor is one of the idioms in the Bible, therefore, which can allude to the tribulation.

Back to what we know about Ruth. Where is Ruth during the threshing floor scene?

At Boaz's feet! Ruth, the Gentile bride, is at the feet of Jesus during the "threshing," during the Tribulation, on the earth.

As with all types you cannot teach doctrine from it. But knowing of the rapture, and of our position safe with Jesus in Heaven during the Tribulation, we are certainly justified in seeing the type in Ruth's position of blessing on the threshing floor.