

Reading the last verse of Chapter 2, we see that Ruth has been gleaning in Boaz's fields during the harvest time of both the barley and wheat – a period of eight to ten weeks. In this chapter their mutual regard ripens almost to the point of marriage.

Most readers are somewhat disconcerted by Ruth's forwardness on the threshing floor. To those in our culture it appears that she is making improper advances toward him. But we are assured both by commentators and the known character of Ruth and Boaz that such a liaison is unlikely. So what might Ruth have in mind when she lifts Boaz's cloak and lies at his feet?

First, she is symbolically putting herself under his protection. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation" (Isa. 61:10).

Second, by lying at his feet Ruth is humbling herself before Boaz. Think of those who fell at Jesus' feet to worship Him, or the woman who kissed and anointed His feet.

Third, she has knowingly placed herself in a vulnerable position. If Boaz should cry out and wake

others when he finds her, it will at least embarrass her and probably bring her deep shame. But he does not. "Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you" (Psalm 25:20).

Finally, it is clear from Boaz's comments in verse 10 that both parties have marriage in mind. In a similar figure, the Lord says to Israel, "I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you ... and you became mine" (Ezek. 16:8).

Question: How do these also apply to the sinner who approaches the Lord in faith and is saved?

Notes

3:2 The barley was harvested but apparently not winnowed until the wheat was also in.

3:10 It seems the customs of the time linked together two distinct commandments: That a redeemer should reclaim lost property for a deceased relative's family (Lev. 25:25) and that a man's brother should marry his widow to sustain his lineage (Deut. 25:5). Thus, the kinsman redeemer was expected to marry the widow whose land he restored (if she was of childbearing age anyway).

Questions:

1. What does Naomi have in mind with her detailed instructions for Ruth?
2. This portion can be read as the nation of Israel coming to her Redeemer in the future kingdom. In this interpretation, what is symbolized by the "nearer" redeemer in verse 12?

3. What makes Ruth a worthy woman (verse 11)?

4. What do the six measures of barley tell Naomi about Boaz?

5. What have we learned about the character of Boaz in this chapter (as a man, and as a type of Christ)?

6. What other notable events in Scripture take place at threshing floors?