

# Pentecost and the Rapture

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NO MAN KNOWS the day of the Rapture (Matt. 24:36–44).

There is, however, a day on God’s calendar that strikingly foreshadows this event.

The following is a summary of 30 correlations between the biblical festival Pentecost and the catching away of the Church.

## 30 WAYS PENTECOST FORESHADOWS THE RAPTURE

### 1. A Harvest Festival

The most telling feature of Pentecost is that it is one of three harvest festivals, during which all Israelite males are required to appear before the Lord:

“Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me. ‘Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread .... the Festival of Harvest [Pentecost] ... and the Festival of Ingathering [Tabernacles] ... Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord God’” (Ex. 23:14–17).

A harvest and gathering before God denote a resurrection or rapture (Matt. 13:30, 39; 2 Thess. 2:1; Rev. 7:9–14).

Furthermore, the three harvest festivals correspond to the “order” of resurrections mentioned by Paul: “But each [will be resurrected] in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor. 15:23).

The harvest at Unleavened Bread corresponds to Jesus’ resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20).

The harvest at Pentecost corresponds to the Church’s resurrection–rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–17).

The harvest at Tabernacles corresponds to the resurrection of tribulation saints at the Second Coming (Rev. 20:4–6).

## **2. A Great Multitude**

Of the three harvest festivals, Pentecost typically saw the largest crowds. This is because the other harvest festivals occurred in the early spring and fall when adverse weather could interfere with travel from distant lands. A large crowd gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost corresponds to the great multitude gathered before God's throne at the Rapture (Rev. 7:9).

## **3. The Firstfruits of the Wheat**

Pentecost celebrates the firstfruits of the wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22). The Rapture is when the first of the "wheat," symbolic of believers, is harvested and gathered into God's "barn" (Matt. 13).

## **4. A Gathering from Every Nation**

At the Church's first Pentecost, devout people from every nation, tribe, and language were gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5, 6). At the Rapture, devout people from every nation, tribe, and language will be gathered in heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 7:9).

## **5. Gathered in One Place**

On the Church's first Pentecost, all the believers were gathered in one place (Acts 2:1). The next time all believers will be gathered in one place is at the Rapture (Rev. 7:9).

## **6. A Time of Rejoicing**

Pentecost is a time to rejoice before the Lord: "Celebrate the Festival of Weeks [Pentecost] ... and rejoice before the LORD your God" (Deut. 16: 10, 11.) The ultimate time of rejoicing before the Lord will be immediately after the Rapture (Rev. 7:9–12; 1 Thess. 2:19).

## **7. The Wave Offering**

The wave offering of the grain-sheaf during Unleavened Bread is a picture of Jesus' resurrection (Lev. 23:10; 1 Cor. 15:20). Thus, the subsequent wave offering of baked loaves on Pentecost is a picture of the Church's resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23). The ripening of grain during the seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost symbolizes the growth and maturation of the Body of Christ during the Church Age. The grain transformed into bread on Pentecost represents the Church in a state of fullness, or completion, at the Rapture.

## **8. A Time of Accountability**

When the Israelites appeared before the Lord on Pentecost, they were required to bring an offering proportionate to the blessings God had bestowed upon them (Deut. 16:16, 17). The requirement to bring a proportionate offering recalls how one's fruits will be judged at the end of the age: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 12:48).

## **9. Seven Weeks Precede Messiah**

Pentecost is the festival preceded by a count of "seven weeks" (Lev. 23:15, 16). In Daniel 9, a count of "seven weeks" precedes an appearance of Messiah the Prince: "From the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks" (Dan. 9:25).

## **10. Payday for Redemption**

The sending of the Holy Spirit on the Church's first Pentecost is called the "down payment" on our redemption (Eph. 1:14). Since the down payment for redemption occurred on Pentecost, it is logical for the final payment, the redemption of our physical bodies at the Rapture, to occur on Pentecost (Rom. 8:23).

## **11. A Time of Sealing**

Pentecost is the day on which the Church was first sealed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). At the Rapture, the firstfruits of Israel will be sealed by the Holy Spirit (Rev. 7:3, 4). If the sealing of the Church on Pentecost was the model, the sealing of Israel at the Rapture may occur on Pentecost as well.

## **12. The Third Day**

Moses ascended Sinai to receive the Commandments on the "third day," corresponding to Pentecost (Ex. 19). In John chapter 2, Jesus attends a wedding on the third day and alludes to the fact that He will be resurrected on the third day (vv. 1, 19–21). Thus, Pentecost is symbolically a "third day," a day associated with weddings and resurrections.

## **13. The 50<sup>th</sup> Day**

The Greek word translated Pentecost, *Pentēkostē*, means "fiftieth." Fifty is the number of redemption, pertaining to the Jubilee (Lev. 25:9, 10). Also, wherever the number 50 appears in Scripture it denotes fullness and completion, pointing to the fullness of the Gentiles at the Rapture.

#### **14. A Wedding Day**

The wedding between God and Israel occurred on Pentecost (Ex 19).

Similarly, the betrothal of the Church to God occurred on Pentecost (Acts 2; Eph. 4:30). This is significant because, according to the ancient wedding tradition, the bridegroom comes for the bride around the anniversary of the betrothal.

#### **15. Ruth**

In the Book of Ruth, the wedding of the Jewish redeemer to the Gentile bride—a picture of the Wedding of Messiah at the Rapture—occurred around Pentecost (Ruth 4:9–10).

#### **16. Rapture Allegory in Song of Solomon**

In Song of Solomon, the shepherd comes to gather and spirit away His beloved Gentile maid—a picture of the Rapture—in late spring, around the time of Pentecost (Song 2).

#### **17. Enoch's Rapture**

According to Jewish tradition, Pentecost is when Enoch, a prophetic type of the Church, was taken up, or raptured, to be with God (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5).

#### **18. Positionally, Pentecost Denotes the Church Age**

Pentecost's parenthetical placement between the first and last harvest festivals, Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles, is suggestive of the Church Age.

#### **19. Inference Via Festival Attendance**

Scripture mentions Jesus going to Jerusalem for the harvests at Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles but not Pentecost (John 2:23; 5:1; 7; Luke 2:41–43). Conversely, Scripture mentions Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, going to Jerusalem for Pentecost but not the other harvests (Acts 20:1–6). Jesus' nonappearance at Pentecost may foreshadow His appearing only in the clouds at this festival's fulfillment. Similarly, Paul's attendance at Pentecost may point to the Church being in heavenly Jerusalem on this day.

## **20. The Short and Abrupt Harvest Festival**

The first and last harvest festivals, Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles, both last for seven days (Lev. 23). In contrast, Pentecost is a one-day harvest festival, comparatively short and abrupt like the Rapture of the Church.

## **21. The Festival With No Set Date**

Pentecost is the only harvest festival with no assigned date in Scripture; it is instead calculated by counting seven weeks from the “day after the Sabbath” (Lev. 23:15). That Pentecost has no assigned date means “no one knows the day” (Matt. 24:36).

## **22. An Hour We Think Not**

Jesus tells His followers that He is coming at an hour they “think not” (Matt. 24:44). Because there is disagreement around which Sabbath to count the seven weeks from, the correct date of Pentecost is in question. It is thus possible that God’s true Pentecost is on a day most would “think not.”

## **23. The Festival of God’s Trump**

The first time God’s trumpet was sounded was on Pentecost, when He descended in a cloud on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19). If the model holds, the next time God’s trumpet is sounded, at the Rapture, may be on Pentecost as well.

## **24. Peter Proclaims the Day of the Lord on Pentecost**

On the Church’s first Pentecost, Peter stood up and quoted a prophecy from Joel:

“Then Peter stood up ... raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you ... this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people .... The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord’” (Acts 2).

It makes sense that Peter would quote the part of Joel about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as this is what was occurring that day. However, the question arises: why would Peter, at that time, quote the part of Joel about the coming Day of the Lord? Peter’s quoting of a prophecy about the onset of the Day of the Lord on Pentecost suggests the two are connected.

## 25. Judgment Day for Trees

In Judaism, it is taught that Pentecost (Shavuot) is when fruit trees are judged. In Scripture, fruit trees represent people (Ps. 1:3). The trees that do not produce “good fruit” by way of a relationship with Jesus are “cut down” and thrown into the “fire” of Tribulation (Matt. 3:10–12; 7:17–23; 25:11–13).

## 26. Ancient Scripture Readings

Since ancient times, the Jewish scripture readings associated with Pentecost describe the Lord judging the earth (Ezek. 1:1–28; 3:12; Hab. 2:20–3:19). If Pentecost is mainly about the giving of the Commandments or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as commonly taught, why do the passages read on this day depict the Lord coming in judgment?

## 27. The Festival Preceding Summer

Pentecost is the harvest festival that occurs in late spring, just before summer begins. In Matthew 24, summer is a metaphor for the end of the age (Matt. 24:32).

Moreover, in the Old Testament, summer is when . . .

- The “godly people” are said to have “vanished” from the earth (Mic. 7:1, 2 NLT).
- The Jews lament not being saved at the harvest (Jer. 8:20).
- Israel is deemed ripe for judgment (Amos 8:1, 2).

## 28. The Time of Ripening Figs

Pentecost, occurring in late spring, is when early figs ripen. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that . . .

- Figs represent Jews (Amos 8:1, 2).
- Figs that ripen early are said to be very good, or desirable (Hos. 9:10).
- Early ripe figs, because they are desirable, are quickly “snatched up” (Isa. 28:4 NLT).

Could the figs that ripen early, around Pentecost, be symbolic of believing Jews “snatched up” at the Rapture?

## **29. The Festival Preceding the Grape Harvest**

In Scripture, the harvesting and crushing of grapes symbolizes the judgment of nonbelievers at the Day of the Lord (Rev. 14:14–20). In ancient Israel, grapes were the first major crop to ripen after Pentecost.

## **30. The Festival of New Beginnings**

Pentecost marks the beginning of new dispensations in Scripture, namely the Age of Law and the Church Age (Ex. 19; Acts 2). If the pattern holds, Pentecost may mark the beginning of the next dispensation, the Day of the Lord.

With the above summary in view, it is fair to say that Pentecost, better than any other festival, embodies the types and themes of the Rapture: harvest, fullness, completion, redemption, resurrection, a wedding, a gathering, a new beginning, an unknown date, and the sounding of God's trumpet.

The fundamental theme of Pentecost is, again, the harvest. There are three main harvest festivals and three main resurrections in God's plan of redemption, suggestive of the following scenario:

- Unleavened Bread (First Coming)
- Pentecost (Rapture)
- Tabernacles (Second Coming)

Pentecost clearly foreshadows the harvest of the Church. What is less clear is whether the harvest will occur on the day marked Pentecost on our calendars.

## **A DAY NO ONE KNOWS**

While the preliminary fulfillment of Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit, occurred on the day the festival was observed by the early Church (Acts 2), one cannot be as certain about the ultimate fulfillment, the Rapture, as the day of this event is said to be unknown (Matt 24:36). That the day is unknown is why Jesus implores us to "keep watch" and not assume He is delaying if He fails to appear at an expected time (Matt. 24:42–51; 25:1–13).

Paul emphasizes that the day is unknown in a letter to the Church at Thessalonica:

"Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:1, 2).

According to Paul, there is no need to discuss dates because it is already understood that Jesus is coming like a thief. Question: on which day does a thief show up? Answer: no one knows. One might know generally when a thief may show up—e.g., late at night or when nobody is home. However, to try and pinpoint the day or hour would seem futile. So if our reading of 1 Thessalonians is correct, the Lord could appear on a day not expected.

To reconcile the notion of an unexpected day with an appointed time such as Pentecost, I have considered two possible scenarios.

The first possibility is that Pentecost, the harvest festival with no fixed date, is not about a date at all but rather points *symbolically* to a time of fullness or ripeness. Recall that Pentecost is the 50<sup>th</sup> day, and the number 50 symbolizes fullness or completion. In this scenario, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church's first Pentecost represents the planting of a 'field,' the Church-field, which has been growing and maturing for almost 2,000 years. No one knows when exactly the last believer will be sealed by the Holy Spirit and the Church-field deemed ripe for harvest in accordance with God's timetable.

The other scenario I have considered to reconcile an unexpected day with an appointed time is that the Rapture will indeed occur at Pentecost. However, due to confusion around the correct reckoning of the festival, the day marked Pentecost on our calendars may not represent God's true Pentecost.

For the above reasons, it is wise to think of Pentecost as a 'season,' rather than a mere 24-hour period.

Better yet, be ready *always!*

Jesus is coming soon.