

Does Israel's Harvest Cycle Point to a Spring Rapture?

By T.W. Tramm

IN DEUTERONOMY, the major crops of Israel are listed as, wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and honey (8:8).

These can be divided into three main harvests:

- The grain harvest.
- The grape harvest.
- The fig and olive harvest.

The harvests are important eschatologically because they typify God's dealings with three main groups of people in the last days. To get a handle on this typological picture, we need to first identify which group each crop represents.

In Scripture:

- Grain represents believers in Christ, or the Church (Matt. 3:12; 13:24-30).
- Grapes represent nonbelievers (Rev. 14:18-20; 19:15).
- Figs and olives are symbolic of Israel (Matt. 24:32-34; Jer. 24:1, 2; Rom. 11:17-25; Jer. 11:16).

Now, to understand the "whens" of the typological picture, let's consider the *timing* of the respective harvests:¹

The Spring Grain Harvest

In ancient Israel, barley and wheat both ripened in the spring. The barley matured faster and would be harvested first, beginning in April. The wheat would generally be harvested from the end of April to the end of May. And so, the entire grain harvest—both barley and wheat—would typically be completed by Pentecost. An exception was in cooler regions, where crops matured later. In areas like the Galilee, for instance, part of the grain might be harvested shortly after Pentecost, especially when the harvest festival came as early as mid-May.²

The Summer Grape Harvest

Grapes were the first major crop to ripen after Pentecost. They would be harvested throughout the summer and into the fall, from June into September.

The Late Summer/Autumn Fruit (Fig and Olive) Harvest

Figs and olives were harvested in August and September, respectively, the olive harvest extending well into the fall.

With both the timing and symbolic meaning of Israel's crops in view, a basic typological picture emerges: A pretrib Rapture of the Church occurring in the late spring/early summer. The harvest of the grain (Church) occurs around Pentecost, with the possibility of some additional harvesting afterward.³ The ripening and crushing of the grapes (judgment of nonbelievers) comes next, during the summer period intervening the spring and fall harvests. Finally, the harvesting of figs and olives (Israel's redemption at the end of the Tribulation) occurs in the fall.

That the Rapture of the Church might occur in the late spring/early summer, around the completion of the grain harvest, is supported by numerous biblical types and patterns related to Pentecost.

For instance:

- Pentecost is a "wedding" day in Jewish tradition, as this was when the covenant between God and the children of Israel was sealed at Mount Sinai.⁴
- Pentecost is when a Gentile bride (type of the Church) marries a Jewish redeemer (type of Christ) in the Book of Ruth.
- The spring/Pentecost season is when the shepherd (type of Christ) comes to retrieve his beloved, a Shulammite/Gentile maid (type of the Church), in the Song of Solomon (2:8-10).
- Pentecost is when the Church was betrothed to God. This is significant because, traditionally, the Jewish bridegroom comes for the bride around the *anniversary* of the betrothal.⁵
- Pentecost is when Enoch, a prophetic type of the Church, was born and also "raptured."
- The two baked loaves raised up before the Lord on Pentecost (Lev. 23:17) represent the end product, or *final state*, of the grain. The final state of the *Church* will be attained at the Rapture.
- Pentecost is one of three designated harvest feasts during which every Israelite male was obliged to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-17; 2 Chron. 8:13). A harvest and a

gathering before the Lord denote rapture/resurrection (Rev. 7:9-14; 14:15; 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Thess. 2:1).

- On Pentecost, when an Israelite appeared before the Lord, he was required to bring an offering proportionate to the blessings God had bestowed upon him (Deut. 16:16, 17). The requirement to appear before the Lord with an offering proportionate to one's blessings reminds us of Jesus' admonition concerning the judgment of one's "fruits" at the end of the age: "*From everyone who has been given much, much will be required*" (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 12:48).
- Pentecost is the harvest feast that occurs just before *summer*. In Matthew, "summer" is a metaphor for the end of the age (Matt. 24:32).
- Pentecost is the only feast preceded by a *countdown*, creating an air of expectancy and anticipation around this particular harvest.
- Pentecost has no assigned or fixed date in Scripture. Thus, "no man knows the day."
- Pentecost's parenthetical placement between the first three spring feasts (First Coming) and fall feasts (Second Coming) is suggestive of the Church Age.
- Pentecost celebrates the wheat harvest. Jesus says the wheat harvest is the end of the age (Matt. 13).
- The multiple "orders" of resurrection mentioned by Paul (1 Cor. 15:23) are believed to correspond to the three harvest festivals (Deut 16:16). In this scenario, the first harvest (Firstfruits) is fulfilled by Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). The last harvest (Tabernacles) is fulfilled by a resurrection after the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4-6). This leaves the *middle* harvest (Pentecost) to be fulfilled by the Church's resurrection.
- The sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost 33AD is called the "down payment" on our redemption (Eph. 1:14). Since the down payment on our redemption occurred on Pentecost, it would seem logical for the full or final payment—*the redemption of our bodies at the Rapture* (Rom. 8:23)—to occur on the same day.
- Pentecost is observed on the 50th day. Fifty is the number of Jubilee (the year of redemption⁶) and symbolizes deliverance and rest, as in freedom granted slaves or release from a task or burden. Additionally, wherever the number 50 is used in Scripture it denotes fullness and completion. The themes of *deliverance, rest, fullness, and completion* describe the end of the Church Age.⁷

Finally, it's interesting to note how the seven-week countdown to Pentecost, corresponding to Israel's journey from Egypt to Sinai (see Exodus) typifies the Church Age.

Note the parallels.

Israel's Journey:

- They were spared from death via the blood of a lamb on Passover.
- They left Egypt and wandered the wilderness, facing trials and tests for seven weeks (a timespan denoting completion and perfection), before reaching Sinai.
- They were wedded to God at the end of their journey to Sinai, on Pentecost.

The Church's Age-Long Journey:

- Christians are spared from death via the blood of a Lamb (Jesus' atoning death) on Passover.
- Christians leave "Egypt" (representing sin) and begin a spiritual "march through the wilderness," facing trials and tests for an antitypical "seven weeks" (a period determined by God during which the Church reaches its fullness).
- Christians are wedded to God at the end of their journey, at the Rapture.

That the seven-week countdown to Pentecost typifies the Church Age is validated in other ways:

- Agriculturally, the ripening of the wheat during the seven weeks symbolizes the growth and maturation of the Body of Christ throughout the Church Age.
- The seven weeks correspond to the seven consecutive Church eras described in Revelation: *Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea* (chpts. 2, 3).

CONCLUSION

Based on the above, one could argue that Pentecost, better than any other feast, embodies the themes and elements we associate with the catching away of the Church: "the grain harvest," "fullness," "completion," "redemption," "mystery," "marriage," etc.

For those convinced that the Rapture cannot occur around Pentecost because the Feast of Trumpets best typifies the harvest of the Church, the following are valid questions:

- Is Trumpets a *harvest* feast?

- Is Trumpets linked explicitly to a wedding in Scripture?
- Is Trumpets associated with the number 50, God’s number of redemption, fullness, and completion?
- Is Trumpets linked to changes in dispensation (beginnings and/or ends) related to Israel and the Church?

The point is that all of these things are true of Pentecost and *none* of them are true of Trumpets. What many will find surprising, in view of the numerous themes and traditions assigned to the Feast of Trumpets, is that Scripture actually says very little about this appointed time—only that it’s a Sabbath on which a “memorial blowing of trumpets” is to occur.

All the rest is supposition.⁸

Does this mean the Rapture is *sure* to happen on Pentecost?

It does not.

Despite the efforts of scholars and watchmen throughout the centuries to determine the appointed day of the Rapture, the reality is that enough ambiguity exists in Scripture to allow for different scenarios. The Lord could fulfill the remaining feasts in a way we haven’t anticipated, or even rapture the Church on a *non-feast day*.

One theory holds that while Pentecost typifies the Rapture, the event need not occur on the actual day of Pentecost. According to this view, the lack of an assigned date for this particular feast points to its ultimate fulfillment date being a mystery.⁹ In other words, Pentecost’s observance at the end of a countdown of seven weeks, on the 50th day, is merely *symbolic* of a state of fullness or completion for the Church, which can occur at whatever time God determines “the fullness of the Gentiles”¹⁰ has come in.

On the other hand, the Rapture could *indeed* occur on a feast day. Of the likely candidates, the late-spring harvest festival called the “feast of conclusion” is one to consider. Is it possible that while most are waiting for God’s trump to sound on the Feast of Trumpets it will, instead, be heard on the same day it was heard in the Old Testament—Pentecost?¹¹

Only the One sounding the trumpet knows.

This is why He tells us to “*keep watch!*”¹²

(For more on a possible Pentecost Rapture see: [Does Scripture Support a Pentecost Rapture?](#))

NOTES:

1. All harvest times are taken from the book, *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel*, by Oded Borowski. See also: <https://www.gci.org/law/festivals/harvest>

Table 3. Harvesting and ingathering,
based on modern agricultural practices in Israel

	March	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Wheat			x						
Barley		x							
Oats			x						
Peas		x	x						
Chickpeas				x					
Lentils		x	x						
Vetch		x	x						
Sesame					x				
Flax					x				
Millet					x	x			
Grapes				x	x	x	x		
Figs						x	x		
Pomegranates						x	x		
Olives							x	x	x

Harvest times for the various crops: courtesy of *Agriculture in Iron Age Israel* (p. 37).

2. Even though the entire crop might not be harvested by Pentecost, Pentecost still celebrated the *entire* grain harvest, including the small amount of grain to be harvested shortly after the festival.
3. That the wheat is harvested later than the barley and, in some cases, even after Pentecost, corresponds to the view held by some that the barley and wheat represent two different groups of believers: The barley is said to represent the “overcomers”—ardent Christians who are looking for the Lord’s return. The wheat is said to represent “backslidden,” or lukewarm, Christians.
4. That the children of Israel were called to be the Lord’s bride is attested to in many Scriptures, e.g., Isaiah 54:5: “Your creator [the LORD] is your husband. The traditional Jewish wedding includes certain elements: a *mikvah* (ceremonial cleansing), a *chuppah* (wedding canopy), and a *ketubah* (marriage agreement). We find these same elements at Mount Sinai: The *mikvah*, or ceremonial cleansing, is God’s command to the people to cleanse themselves and make themselves ready for the marriage (Ex. 19:10-14). The *chuppah*, or wedding canopy, is Mount Sinai, which God covers with a cloud. The Hebrew text

can literally be translated: “They stood *under* the mountain” (Ex. 19:17). The *ketubah*, or marriage agreement, is the Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17).

5. The biblical wedding tradition consists of two stages. The first stage is the betrothal, or *erusin*, at which time the bride and groom are considered legally married but do not dwell together. The second stage is the fullness or consummation (*nisu'in*), when the groom comes to take the bride to his house and nuptials are finalized. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, the betrothal period in-between lasted 12 months: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3229-betrothal>

6. The Jubilee is the “year of *redemption*” (Lev. 25:10; Isa. 63:4). “Redemption” is the term used to describe the renewal of our physical bodies at the Rapture (Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30; Luke 21:28).

7. Wherever fifty is mentioned in Scripture it signifies what is full or complete. For example: The maximum age for the Levite priests charged with performing the rituals at the Temple was fifty, denoting the *full discharge* of one’s priestly duties (Num. 4:23). A man who lies with a virgin not pledged in marriage must give the damsel’s father fifty pieces of silver, as *full restitution* (Deut. 22:29). David paid fifty shekels of silver for the threshing-floor where he built the altar to God, denoting a *full price and purchase* (2 Sam. 24:24). Absalom provided for himself a chariot and horses with fifty men to run ahead of them, denoting *full excellence and greatness* (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5).

8. Most themes linked to the Feast of Trumpets derive from rabbinic traditions. The only event linked directly to Trumpets in Scripture is the rebuilding of the Temple altar and reinstatement of sacrifice that occurred upon the Jews’ return from Babylonian exile (Ezra 3:1-6).

9. The view that Pentecost typifies the Rapture but that the catching away need not occur on Pentecost is articulated by a number of respected scholars and teachers, including Jack Langford in his book, *The Pentecostal Rapture of the Church of Jesus Christ*.

10. Rom. 11:25; Acts 5:14.

11. The trumpet sounded at the Rapture is “*God’s trump*” (1 Thess. 4:16). Apart from the Rapture, the only place in Scripture God’s trumpet is heard is when Moses ascends Sinai, *on Pentecost*, to receive the Commandments (Ex. 19: 16-20).

12. Matt. 24:42, 43; 25:1-13; 1 Thess. 5:6.