

God's Harvest Festivals and the Rapture of the Church

By T.W. Tramm

THE BIBLE designates three annual harvest festivals at three different times:¹

- Unleavened Bread in the early spring
- Pentecost, in the spring/early summer
- Tabernacles in the fall

At the center of the first two harvest festivals, Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, is a ritual called a "wave offering."

The first wave offering was performed on the day after the Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread. On this day, a sheaf of the first ripened grain was harvested and brought to the Temple to be raised up before the Lord (Lev. 23:10, 11). Prophetically, the raising of the sheaf before God is a picture of Jesus' resurrection: it was on this day, 2,000 years ago, that Messiah was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven to stand before the Father.

The second wave offering was performed 50 days later on Pentecost. On this day, two loaves of leavened bread, representing grain in its full or completed state, were brought to the Temple and raised up before the Lord (Lev. 23:17, 20). True to the type established by the first wave offering at Unleavened Bread, the raising up of the loaves on Pentecost *also* pictures a resurrection—that of the Church.

Paul associates the wave offering at Pentecost with the Rapture of the Church when he speaks of the "offering up" of the Gentiles being acceptable to the Lord:

"I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the *offering up of the Gentiles* might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15:16).

We know that Paul is not referring to the wave offering at Unleavened Bread because he understood this offering to be fulfilled by Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20). We also know that Paul is not referring merely to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 33AD as this event was already long past when he spoke these words in Romans. Therefore, the "offering up" Paul refers to is the Rapture, typified by the Pentecost wave offering.

Owing to the wave offering and other typologies, many look for the Rapture to occur on or around Pentecost.² This year's harvest festival is seeing a heightened sense of anticipation as it's the 70th since

Israel became a nation in 1948.^{3,4} The number 70 is vitally connected to God's chosen nation, from its founding to its redemption at the end of the age:

- Abraham's father, Terah, was 70 years old when Israel's chief patriarch was born (Gen. 11:26).
- The Nation of Israel began with 70 Hebrews who migrated to Egypt (Ex. 1:1-5).
- Moses appointed 70 elders to lead Israel at Mount Sinai (Num. 11:16).
- Israel's greatest ruler, King David, died at the age of 70 (2 Sam. 5:4).
- The Jews were redeemed from captivity in Babylon after 70 years (Jer. 29:10).
- God's plan of redemption for Israel is comprised of 70 weeks (Dan. 9:24).

Even pivotal events in Israel's history tend to occur at a 70-year interval:

- From the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BC to the completion of the Second Temple in 516 BC is 70 years.
- From the first modern Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel (Petah Tikvah) in 1878 to the birth of the Nation in 1948 is 70 years.
- From the first major step in reestablishing the State of Israel (First Zionist Congress) in 1897 to the final step (restoration of Jerusalem) in 1967 is 70 years.

From its inception millennia ago to its redemption during the tribulation week, the number 70 is inextricably linked to the Nation of Israel; by way of type and pattern it denotes completion or an endpoint for God's people.

Speaking of a prophetic endpoint, one of the most important occurrences of the number 70 is in the Psalms where a typical human lifespan is defined as 70 years (Ps. 90:10). This is crucial pertaining to Israel's 70th Pentecost because Jesus says the generation who sees the leafing of the fig tree will also see His return:

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened" (Matt. 24:32, 34).

A nearly 2,000-year-long season of "bare branches" concluded 70 years ago, in the spring of 1948, when the fig tree, Israel, came back to life and began putting forth leaves.

God has provided the signs, typologies, and timelines in Scripture so we can discern the season of His return (1 Thess. 5:1-4). We are instructed to “keep watch” and to encourage one another as we “see the day approaching” (Matt. 24:42-44; Heb. 10:25). While not even the angels know *which* day, it’s clear that our redemption is near—even at the door (Matt. 24:33). It will not be long before the Church is harvested and delivered up before the Lord as the ultimate wave offering.

The fulfillment of Pentecost’s wave offering via the Rapture of the Church brings us to the third and final harvest festival, Tabernacles. What type of fulfillment will God’s culminating harvest see? Because a harvest denotes a resurrection in Scripture, we understand that Tabernacles will also see a raising of the dead. In this case, however, note that Leviticus does *not* prescribe a wave offering, signifying an offering up before the Lord in heaven (Lev. 23:34-41). This is because those resurrected at the final harvest will not be raptured, or caught up into the clouds like the Church, but will enter immediately into the Millennial Kingdom on earth under the reign of King Jesus.

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4).

NOTES:

1. The three yearly harvest feasts were particularly important in God’s eyes. In Exodus, He designates each as a time when every Israelite male is to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to present an offering in accordance with the blessing the Lord had given (Ex. 23:14-17; 2 Chron. 8:13; Deut. 16: 11-12; 16, 17). In the Bible, a harvest and a gathering before the Lord denote resurrection (Rev. 7:9-14; 14:15; 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Thess. 2:1).

2. Pentecost and the Rapture:

Pentecost study: http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/DOES_SCRIPTURE_SUPPORT_A_P...

Pentecost article: http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/DOES_ISRAELS_HARVEST_CYCLE...

Spring rapture typologies: http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/THE_SEASON_OF_THE_RAPTURE_-_12 TYPOLOGIES THAT POINT TO THE SPRING.pdf

3. Pentecost 2018 is also the first harvest season following the presumed jubilee year ending at Nisan 2018. In answer to the question of why no jubilee rapture, is it possible that the harvester of the Church is honoring the Levitical law that prohibits reaping or harvesting during the Jubilee? (Lev. 25:11, 12).

4. Based on the common reckoning that Nisan 1 is the new moon *nearest* (before or after) the vernal equinox, most calendars have Pentecost occurring May 20 in 2018. A convincing case is made, however, that Nisan 1 should be reckoned only *after* the vernal equinox (see my article "When Is Nisan 1?"). This method of reckoning puts Pentecost a month later, between June 20-25, in 2018.