

High Watch Time Ahead

By T.W. Tramm

RAPTURE believers who study the feasts tend to fall into two main camps: the “Pentecost” rapture camp and the “Trumpets” rapture camp.

Both scenarios find scriptural support.

One of the compelling things about the Pentecost scenario is that the harvest festival has no assigned date. Some prophecy teachers suggest this typifies the Rapture occurring on an unknown day during the grain harvest season, which can extend into the latter part of the summer or early fall.¹ Thus, the “pentecostal rapture” scenario conforms well to Jesus’ statement that no man or angel knows the day or hour of His coming.

The Feast of Trumpets also corresponds to the “no man knows” theme, as it’s the only appointed time that commences with the sighting of the new moon, making it impossible to predict the “day or hour” the festival will begin.

Because a case can be made for a Pentecost rapture, a Trumpets rapture, or a rapture on an unknown day during the season connecting the two festivals, it doesn’t make sense to be dogmatic. My stance, therefore, has been that it’s best to avoid overly focusing on dates as we watch for the Lord’s possible return in this Jubilee year. With the end of summer 2017 nearly upon us, however, it’s time to consider the date everyone is talking about.

SEPTEMBER 23

September 21-23 is an especially interesting time this year, due to a unique convergence:

- September 22 marks the fall equinox and the official end of summer.
- September 21-22 marks the Feast of Trumpets.
- September 21 marks the UN’s International Day of Peace.
- September 23 marks the “Revelation 12 sign,” an astronomical alignment believed to picture a woman in labor, giving birth. (Please see the bottom of the notes section for additional comments on this sign.)

What makes this convergence so interesting?

Consider the following Bible passages pertaining to the end of the age, paying extra attention to the words capitalized:

“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” (Matt. 24:32).²

“The harvest is past, the SUMMER has ended, and we [Israel] are not saved” (Jer. 8:20).³

“In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, AT THE LAST TRUMPET [...the...] trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and WE WILL BE CHANGED” (1 Cor. 15:52).

“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. While people are saying, ‘PEACE AND SAFETY,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as LABOR PAINS ON A PREGNANT WOMAN, and they will not escape” (1 Thess. 5: 1-3).

Notice how the themes “summer,” “trumpets,” “peace and safety,” and “labor pains,” correspond to the September 21-23 convergence of the fall equinox, the Feast of Trumpets, the UN’s Day of Peace, and the Revelation 12 sign.

It’s important to note the uniqueness of this convergence. Due to the lunisolar nature of the Hebrew calendar, the Feast of Trumpets doesn’t always coincide with the fall equinox (end of summer). In fact, Trumpets hasn’t occurred on the last day of summer in at least a decade, and it won’t again for years to come.

Equally noteworthy is the fact that the UN’s International Day of Peace doesn’t always coincide with the Feast of Trumpets. In fact, the Feast of Trumpets hasn’t coincided with the UN’s Day of Peace since it was first observed on this date 15 years ago.

But that’s not all. Making 2017’s Day of Peace even more noteworthy is the theme:

“Together for Peace: Respect, Safety and Dignity for All.”⁴

That “safety” is a key word in this year’s day-of-peace theme is interesting in view of Paul’s warning about “*peace and safety*” being the topic of discussion when sudden destruction comes upon the world (1 Thess. 5:3). The theme becomes even *more* interesting when we understand that the UN chooses a new theme every year, and not in the last 15 years has the word “safety” been included.

Needless to say, September 21-23 is shaping up to be a super high watch window in which—for the first time ever—multiple themes related to the end of the age are coming together in a 2-3 day period. During this time, the summer harvest will be ending, the trumpets of Tishrei 1 will be sounding, the nations will be promoting peace and safety and—assuming the popular interpretation of Revelation 12

is correct—a unique celestial alignment depicting a woman giving birth will be occurring in the heavens. Again, these elements will not converge again in 2018, 2019, 2020, or any other year we're aware of.

Stepping back to view the larger picture, when one considers that 2017 is the 50th (Jubilee) anniversary of the restoration of Jerusalem, the 70th anniversary of the UN mandate to reestablish the State of Israel, and, according to Bible chronologists, the 6000th year since Creation, the time just ahead warrants an exceedingly high level of expectation concerning major prophetic events.^{5,6,7}

Does this mean the Rapture has to happen around September 21-23?

It does not.

For reasons mentioned earlier and because it's presumptuous to assume we have a lock on one of the most mysterious and guarded aspects of God's plan, it's reckless to set dates. That said, it's *equally* irresponsible to ignore or downplay convergences like the one this September. The Lord has given us signs and a calendar and has commanded us to "watch" (Matt. 24). There is nothing unbiblical about considering a specific timeframe a high possibility for His return. This is what the wise men did 2,000 years ago, and it's what today's "wise virgins" (Matt. 25) should be doing as well.

So let us be watching!

If Jesus doesn't return around this particular watch time, keep looking up because we're still in the larger (jubilee) window, and remember that, despite any uncertainty or unknowingness on our part, God has a plan, and it's unfolding right on schedule.

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NOTES:

1. "Harvesting of spring wheat occurs from mid-August to mid-September."
<https://www.thebalance.com/wheat-planting-and-harvest-seasons-809321>

"Spring wheat is planted in the spring and is harvested in the late summer or early fall."
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/y4011e/y4011e04.htm>

"Winter wheat is usually planted from September to November in the Northern Hemisphere and harvested in the summer or early autumn of the next year."
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_wheat

2. In Matthew 24:32 “summer” is used as a metaphor for the end of the age.

3. In Jeremiah 8:20 the Jews lament having not been saved during the “summer” harvest. See also Micah 7:1, 2, in which the summer is a time when the upright people have been swept from the land and those who remain plot evil against each other: “What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. The faithful have been swept from the land; not one upright person remains. Everyone lies in wait to shed blood; they hunt each other with nets.”

4. UN website: <http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/>

5. According to Isaac Newton, the “seven weeks” of Daniel 9:25 refer to a jubilee cycle that would begin with the Jews’ prophetic return to Jerusalem and end in Christ’s second coming. The Jews’ returned to Jerusalem for the second and final time in 1967 (1967 + 50 = 2017).

6. In Psalm 90:10 the length of a typical generation is 70 years. In Matthew (24:32, 34) Jesus says the generation who witnesses the leafing of the fig tree (return and maturing of Israel as a nation), will see the end of the age.

7. D. Petavius calculated that Creation occurred in 3983 BC, making the earth, as of 2017, 6,000 years old.

THOUGHTS ON THE REVELATION 12 SIGN

Some reject the Revelation 12 Sign because they have issues with the explanation of various elements (crown of stars, Jupiter as the Body of Christ, etc.) and/or view it as “date setting.” On the opposite side, some defend the sign as if it’s a fundamental doctrine of Christianity that cannot be questioned, and those who do are subject to ridicule. I believe the best approach to the sign lies somewhere in-between. It should be considered open-mindedly but with caution.

The debate around the “great sign” in Revelation 12 centers on whether it depicts the birth and ascension of Jesus or the rapture of the Church. My belief is that it can be both. In one sense chapter 12 gives us an historical overview: Verses 1-5 depict Jesus’ birth and ascension. The rest of the chapter describes events occurring over centuries and millennia, including Satan’s persecution of the Jews and their being protected in the “wilderness” (nations) for a time (1,260 days). It’s interesting to note that when we add the 1260 “days,” as years, to 688 AD, the year the satanic Dome of the Rock was set up on the Temple Mount, we arrive at 1948, the year the Jews came out of the nations and returned to their own Land.

In a secondary sense, chapter 12 of Revelation can be seen as depicting the rapture of the Church and the Jews fleeing the persecution of the antichrist. Some reject the notion of a secondary meaning, but the fact is that God’s Word is “alive and active” (Heb. 4:12), and the Bible’s prophecies are often

multilayered and have multiple applications, e.g., a near (historical) application and also a far (end times) application. It's, therefore, reasonable to assume Revelation 12 and its great sign have an end-times application.

For those who reject the sign based on factors such as the crown of stars, the explanation of what Jupiter represents, or various other details, keep in mind that one can ignore these elements, focusing solely on the core astronomical alignment (a woman clothed with the sun with the moon at her feet), and it still points to a particular time of year, September-October, as being pivotal to Israel: The sun and moon align with Virgo in this way every year around the fall feasts. Therefore, the time when Virgo is clothed with the sun and the moon is at her feet is ALWAYS a time to be thinking about Jacob's Trouble, especially in a year with so many other signs and alignments pointing to it.

In a nutshell, because it's possible if not likely that the great sign in Revelation 12 has an end-times application, and because no other present-day astronomical alignment more closely matches the description in verses 1-2, I believe the alignment around September 23 could be the sign John the Revelator refers to. Even if it's not, the general astronomical alignment in Revelation 12:1-5 highlights the importance of the fall season with respect to God's plan of redemption and, sign or no sign, there has never been a fall season more worthy of the watchman's attention than the one just before us.