

Pentecost: Rapture Types and Patterns

By T.W. Tramm

WITH Pentecost fast approaching, it's time to review some of the many ways the harvest festival prefigures the Rapture and Church Age.

Understand this is not the same as saying the Rapture will occur on Pentecost; it is only to say that the types and shadows paint a striking picture of the present Christian era and its climax.

As always, check the Scriptures for yourself to verify what is being said is true (Acts 17:11).

PENTECOST: 24 RAPTURE TYPES AND PATTERNS

1. PENTECOST IS A HARVEST FESTIVAL

The Rapture is a "harvest" and a gathering before God (Rev. 7:9-14; 14:15; 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Thess. 2:1). There are three harvest festivals during which every Israelite male is required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem: Passover (Unleavened Bread), corresponding to Jesus' resurrection at the First Coming; Tabernacles, corresponding to a resurrection at the Second Coming; and Pentecost, corresponding to a resurrection that will happen in-between (Ex. 23:14-17; 1 Cor. 15:20; Rev. 7:9-15; 20:4-6).

2. A GREAT MULTITUDE

Of the three harvest festivals, Pentecost drew the largest crowds. This is because Passover and Tabernacles occurred in early spring and fall, when adverse weather was likely to interfere with travel from distant lands. A large crowd gathered in Jerusalem on Pentecost corresponds to Revelation's depiction of a great multitude gathered before God's throne after the Rapture (7:9).

3. 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).

4. GATHERED IN ONE PLACE

At the Church's first Pentecost, all the believers were gathered in one place (Acts 2:1). At the Rapture, all the believers will be gathered in one place (Rev. 7:9).

5. A TIME OF REJOICING

Pentecost is a time to rejoice before the Lord (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).

6. PENTECOST IS A FIRSTFRUITS FESTIVAL

Pentecost celebrates the “firstfruits” of the wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22). Wheat represents believers (Matt. 13). The first major harvest of believers (wheat) occurs at the Rapture.

7. THE WAVE OFFERING

The wave offering of the grain-sheaf during Passover (on the day of firstfruits) is a picture of Jesus’ resurrection. Since a wave offering signifies a resurrection, the next wave offering on Pentecost, baked loaves, symbolizes the Church’s resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23; Deut. 16:16). The ripening of the grain during the seven-weeks from Passover to Pentecost symbolizes the growth and maturation of the Body of Christ throughout the Church Age. The grain transformed into baked loaves represents the Church in its completed state.

8. A TIME OF ACCOUNTABILITY

On Pentecost, when the Israelites appeared before the Lord, they were required to bring an offering proportionate to the blessings God had bestowed upon them (Deut. 16:16, 17). At the Rapture, the “fruits” of believers will be judged according to what they had been given (Matt. 16:27; 25:14-30; Luke 12:48).

9. COUNTING THE WEEKS

Pentecost is the only festival preceded by a countdown of seven weeks (Lev. 23:15, 16). The only other instances of a “seven-weeks” countdown in Scripture are in Daniel 9 where “seven weeks” precede “Messiah the Ruler” and in Leviticus 25 where “seven weeks” of years precede the jubilee, or year of redemption. Thus in Scripture, a seven-weeks countdown always precedes a harvest, Messiah, or redemption.

10. PAYDAY FOR REDEMPTION

The sending of the Holy Spirit on the Church’s first Pentecost was the “down payment” on our redemption (Eph. 1:14). Since the down payment for redemption occurred on Pentecost, it would make sense for the final payment—the redemption of our bodies at the Rapture—to occur on the same day (Rom. 8:23).

11. A TIME OF SEALING

Pentecost is when the first believers were sealed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). At the Rapture, another group of first believers, 144,000 of the children of Israel, will be likewise sealed, before judgment comes upon the earth (Rev. 7:3, 4).

12. THE THIRD DAY

It was on the morning of the “third day”—corresponding to Pentecost—that Moses ascended Sinai to receive the Commandments from God (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 the “third day,” analogous to Pentecost, is a wedding and resurrection day.

13. THE 50TH DAY

Pentecost is observed on the 50th day. Fifty is the number of Jubilee, or redemption (Lev. 25). Additionally, wherever the number 50 appears in Scripture it signifies fullness and completion (Num. 4:23; Deut. 22:29; 2 Sam. 15:1; 24:24; Kings 1:5). The themes of the number 50—“redemption,” “fullness,” and “completion”—point to the Rapture when the “full” number of Gentiles will come in, corrupt bodies will be “redeemed,” and the Church Age will be “complete” (Rom. 8:23; 11:25).

14. A TIME OF MARRIAGE AND COUPLING:

- Pentecost is a “wedding day” in Exodus 19 as the marriage covenant between God and Israel was sealed on this day at Sinai.
- Pentecost is a day of betrothal in Acts 2 as the sending of the Holy Spirit was the guarantee of the Church’s future wedding.
- Pentecost is a time of marriage in the Book of Ruth where a Gentile bride marries a Jewish redeemer at the end of the wheat harvest (Ruth 2:21-23; 4:10).
- Pentecost is a time of coupling in the Song of Solomon as the shepherd comes to gather and spirit away his beloved Gentile maid when “the fig trees are forming young fruit, and the fragrant grapevines are blossoming” (2:13). Fig trees put forth fruit, and grapevines blossom in May-June, the time of Pentecost.

15. THE FESTIVAL PRECEDING THE GRAPE HARVEST

In Revelation, the harvesting and crushing of grapes symbolizes the judgment of nonbelievers at the Day of the Lord (Rev. 14:14:20). Grapes are the first major crop to ripen after Pentecost.

16. ENOCH'S "RAPTURE"

In Jewish tradition, Pentecost is when Enoch, a prophetic type of the Church, was born and also taken up, or "raptured," to be with the Lord. As an interesting aside, Scripture records that when Enoch was taken up, he was 365 years old, the exact number of days in the Gregorian, also known as the "Christian," calendar year (Gen. 5:23, 24).

17. POSITIONALLY, PENTECOST DENOTES THE CHURCH AGE

Pentecost's parenthetical placement between the spring (Passover) and fall (Tabernacles) festivals is suggestive of the Church Age.

18. THE SHORT AND ABRUPT HARVEST

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

19. INFERENCE VIA FESTIVAL ATTENDANCE

Scripture mentions Jesus going to Jerusalem for the harvests at Passover and Tabernacles but not Pentecost (John 2:23; 5:1; 7; Luke 2:41-43). Conversely, Scripture mentions Paul, the Apostle to the Gentile Church, going to Jerusalem for Pentecost but not Passover or Tabernacles (Acts 20:1-6). Might Jesus' physical absence at Pentecost be indicative of the middle harvest being fulfilled in the clouds, i.e. "heavenly Jerusalem" rather than "earthly Jerusalem" as Passover and Tabernacles?

20. THE FEAST WITH NO SET DATE

Pentecost is the only biblical festival with no assigned or fixed date in Scripture; its observance is determined by a countdown of seven weeks, which begins on a different calendar date from year to year. Thus "no one knows the day" (Lev. 23; Matt. 24:36).

21. THE FESTIVAL OF GOD'S TRUMP

At the Rapture, the "trump of God" is sounded (1 Thess. 4:16). The only other instance of God's trumpet being sounded in Scripture is on Pentecost when the Lord descends in a cloud on Sinai and calls Moses up—a picture of the Rapture (Ex. 19).

22. PETER PROCLAIMS THE DAY OF THE LORD ON PENTECOST

Peter, the Apostle to first bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, prophesied about the coming Day of the Lord on the Church's first Pentecost (Acts 2). Might the Holy Spirit have been hinting through Peter that Pentecost is significant pertaining to the onset of the Day of the Lord?

23. THE FESTIVAL PRECEDING SUMMER

Pentecost is the harvest festival immediately preceding summer. In Matthew, “summer” is a metaphor for the end of the age (24:32-34). Additionally, in Micah, summer is characterized as a time when “the faithful have been swept (removed) from the land” (7:1, 2).

24. PENTECOST MARKS CHANGES IN DISPENSATION

Pentecost marked the beginning of the Age of Law (Sinai) as well as the beginning of the Church Age (Acts 2). If the pattern holds, Pentecost may mark the beginning of the final dispensation, the Day of the Lord.

—end list—

The above types and patterns establish a clear link between Pentecost, the Church age, and its culmination at the Rapture.

Does this mean the Rapture will necessarily occur on the day marked “Pentecost” on our calendars? It does not, for a number of reasons.

First, owing to questions around the correct reckoning of the biblical calendar and also the start of the seven-weeks countdown, Pentecost is the most difficult festival to calculate.

Second, regardless of how logical a scenario may seem, we understand that on this side of eternity we see only in part, as through a “dark piece of glass,” and that our thoughts are not God’s thoughts (1 Cor. 13:12; Isa. 55:8, 9).

Third, and most importantly, Jesus implores us to keep watch “always,” not only on feast days, or days we reckon to be feast days (Luke 21:36).

The purpose of our list of rapture types and patterns is simply to spur thought.

Considering different scenarios is a vital part of encouraging one another as we watch and wait for the Lord’s return (Heb. 10:25; Matt. 24:45, 46). Just as one assembling a puzzle earnestly searches for corresponding pieces, those anticipating the Rapture earnestly search the Scriptures for correlations that may shed light on the timing.

As it is written: “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings” (Prov. 25:2).

We search out the matter with the understanding that we will only “know” the day when the day arrives.

So keep watch!