



The Prophetic Meaning of Pentecost

The Biblical Feast of Pentecost is most often associated with historical events. For most people, the primary thing they associate with Pentecost is the giving of the Holy Spirit and the founding of the New Testament Church in Acts 2. Many also associate the ratifying of the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai with Pentecost as well (Ex 24:4-8). These events are correctly associated with Pentecost as Acts 2:1 directly states that the events described in this chapter took place on Pentecost. In addition, a careful review of scripture can also prove that the events of Exodus 24:4-8 also occurred on Pentecost as well. (For further information on this subject please see the paper entitled "The Spiritual Meaning of Pentecost".) So, it is certainly accurate to associate these historical events with the day of Pentecost. However, Pentecost also has important prophetic meanings that have yet to be fulfilled. The prophetic meanings of Pentecost can be found in the two wave loaves ceremony that was commanded to be performed every year on this day (Lev 23:17-21). To understand the symbolism of this ceremony it is important that we first understand the meaning of the wave sheaf ceremony as these two ceremonies are intimately connected and the symbolism pictured by both ceremonies are very similar.

The Wave Sheaf Ceremony

The feast of Pentecost is unique from the rest of God's Holy Days in that every other Holy Day is commanded to be kept on a specific calendar date. However, Pentecost is unique in that its date varies from year to year because God did not assign a specific date for it to be kept, but rather He instructed Israel to perform a 50 day count each year to determine the exact date of Pentecost for that year. The starting point for this 50 day count was the day the wave sheaf ceremony was performed.

Lev 23:15-16

¹⁵ 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. **¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.**

So, we can see there is a clear connection between the wave sheaf ceremony and the two wave loaves ceremony that was commanded to be performed on Pentecost. Now let's take a look at the details of the wave sheaf ceremony and what the symbolism of this ceremony pictures.

Lev 23:9-14

⁹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a **sheaf of the firstfruits** of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, **to be accepted on your behalf**; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹² And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹³ Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. ¹⁴ You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

In addition to the instructions found in Leviticus 23 for this ceremony, this ceremony is also briefly mentioned twice in the book of Exodus.

Ex 23:19

¹⁹ **The first of the firstfruits** of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

Ex 34:26

²⁶ **"The first of the firstfruits** of your land you shall bring to the house of the Lord your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

Notice that the sheaf of grain that Israel was commanded to use in this ceremony is referred to as a "sheaf of the firstfruits" and also as the "first of the firstfruits". This sheaf was to be waved "before the LORD to be accepted on your behalf". To understand what is being pictured here we first have to identify how the Bible uses the terms "firstfruits" and "first of the firstfruits".

The New Testament uses the term "firstfruits" to refer to converted Christians that have been called to salvation at this time and have received the Holy Spirit.

James 1:16-18

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, **that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**

Rom 8:22-23

²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, **but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit**, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The Bible also uses the term “firstfruits” to refer to Jesus Christ.

1 Cor 15:20-23

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, **and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.**

The firstfruits are the first group of human beings that God has called to salvation and given the opportunity to be born into His Family. Jesus Christ is the first human being to be raised from the dead and to be changed into a God being (of course He was also a God being prior to coming to earth as a human). So, Christ is the “first of the firstfruits”.

Col 1:17-18

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. ¹⁸ And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, **the firstborn from the dead**, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Rom 8:29

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that **He might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

This tells us that the “sheaf of the firstfruits” that was waved before the LORD “to be accepted on your behalf” is a picture of Jesus Christ being presented before God the Father to be accepted as the sacrifice for mankind.

If we look at the details of how the wave sheaf ceremony was conducted, we can see that the symbolism of the ceremony parallels how Christ literally fulfilled this symbolism. These details are demonstrated more clearly in the New Revised Standard Version’s rendering of these verses.

Lev 23:9-12 -- NRSV

⁹ The LORD spoke to Moses: ¹⁰ Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ **He shall raise the sheaf before the LORD**, that you may find acceptance; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall raise it. ¹² On the day when you **raise the sheaf**, you shall offer a lamb a year old, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD.

Lev 23:15 -- NRSV

¹⁵ And from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which you bring the sheaf of the **elevation offering**, you shall count off seven weeks; they shall be complete.

The way this ceremony was performed was that the priest raised or elevated the sheaf of grain upward and then back down again. If we look at the events surrounding Christ’s fulfillment of the ceremony, we can see that the priest raising and then lowering the sheaf of grain accurately pictured the events this ceremony symbolized.

Christ was resurrected at the end of the weekly Sabbath after being in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights. However, He did not immediately ascend to heaven to go before the Father. John 20 describes for us the events that played out the following Sunday morning prior to Christ ascending to heaven to present himself before the Father.

John 20:11-18

¹¹ But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. ¹² And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³ Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴ Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and

did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "**Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father;** but go to My brethren and say to them, '**I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.**'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

Christ directly states here that He is about to ascend to heaven to appear before the Father and also instructs Mary not to touch Him because He has not yet appeared before His Father. This detail is an important clue to help us understand the events that played out later on this same day.

Matt 28:9-10

⁹ And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" **So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.**

¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

Here Christ allows others to touch Him whereas earlier this same day He specifically instructed Mary not to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to heaven to appear before the Father. Obviously, here in Mathew's account Christ has already presented Himself before the Father and has returned back to the earth. So, we can see that Christ fulfilled the wave sheaf offering by starting out on the earth, ascending up to heaven to appear before the Father, and then returning back down to the earth again. This matches exactly with the wave sheaf ceremony. Not only did Christ's actions mirror the way the priest elevated the sheaf of grain up and then back down again, but Christ carried out the fulfillment of this ceremony on the very day the ceremony was commanded to be performed.

The Two Wave Loaves Ceremony

With the context of the wave sheaf ceremony in mind we can now take a look at the two wave loaves ceremony that God commanded Israel to perform every year on the day of Pentecost. The two wave loaves ceremony is very similar to the wave sheaf ceremony.

Lev 23:17-21

¹⁷ You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be **baked with leaven**. **They are the firstfruits to the LORD**. ¹⁸ And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. ¹⁹ Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. ²⁰ The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Instead of a sheaf of grain, here we have two loaves that are baked with leaven. So, we know these loaves cannot be a picture of Jesus Christ. Every time the Bible uses a symbol to represent Jesus Christ it is always unleavened because He lived a perfect life and never sinned. In addition, we are directly told who these loaves represent with the statement “They are the firstfruits to the LORD”. We saw previously that the Bible uses the term firstfruits to refer to converted Christians that have been called to salvation at this time and have received the Holy Spirit (James 1:16-18; Rom 8:29-30). Unlike Christ who lived a perfect life, the firstfruits are carnal, sinful human beings that had to be redeemed from sin (Rev 14:3-4). So, it is fitting to picture this group with loaves that are leavened.

Notice that when the two wave loaves are presented before the LORD both a sin offering and a peace offering are presented together with them (Lev 23:19-20). This is because these loaves represent carnal sinful humans that require the sacrifice of Christ to atone for their sins. Whereas, the wave sheaf is presented before the LORD all by itself (Lev 23:11) because it represents Christ who lived a perfect life without sin.

The ceremony that was performed with these two loaves mirrors the ceremony that was performed with the sheaf of grain in the wave sheaf ceremony. Once again, the New Revised Standard Version provides a clearer translation of the details of this ceremony.

Lev 23:17 -- NRSV

¹⁷ You shall bring from your settlements two loaves of bread as an **elevation offering**, each made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of choice flour, baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD.

Lev 23:20 -- NRSV

²⁰ **The priest shall raise them with the bread of the first fruits as an elevation offering** before the LORD, together with the two lambs; they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.

Just like the wave sheaf, these loaves were elevated upward to be presented before the LORD and then brought back down again. We saw previously that the wave sheaf ceremony contains very similar symbolism with the sheaf being elevated up to be presented before the LORD and then brought back down just like we see here with the two wave loaves. We also saw that the fulfillment of the wave sheaf ceremony was Christ ascending from the earth up to heaven and presenting Himself before God the Father and then returning back to the earth. Bible prophecy shows us that the events of the firstfruits being resurrected to eternal life mirror the symbolism portrayed by the two wave loaves.

1 Thess 4:15-18

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. **And the dead in Christ will rise first.** ¹⁷ **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.** ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Notice in the above scriptures we have two distinct groups, those that have previously died in the faith and the faithful Christians that are still living at the time of the return of Christ. These two distinct groups are differentiated from one another by the order in which they rise to meet Christ. These two distinct groups match the symbolism of the two different loaves in the two wave loaves ceremony. We also see that they are leaving the earth and being elevated upward similar to how the priest would elevate the two loaves in the Pentecost ceremony. If we put together all of the scriptures that address the events of the firstfruits being resurrected to eternal life, we will see that the sequence of events that will occur at their resurrection directly matches the symbolism portrayed in the two wave loaves ceremony.

First let's notice that the events described in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 correlate with the blowing of the seventh trumpet.

1 Cor 15:50-54

⁵⁰ Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

As the Church of God has always taught, the book of Revelation is our best guide in regards to providing us with a sequential order of events of end time prophecy. While the Old Testament prophets provide us with many important details regarding end time prophecy, their accounts are not always laid out in a sequential order that gives a timeline of events. However, the book of Revelation is different in this regard. While the book of Revelation does include a number of inset chapters, overall, the book provides us with a sequential order of events that gives us a framework to understand the timeline of end time prophecy. The book of Revelation describes the blowing of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11.

Rev 11:15-18

¹⁵ **Then the seventh angel sounded:** And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" ¹⁶ Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ singing, "We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. ¹⁸ The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and **the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great,** and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Notice that verse 18 refers to "the time for judging the dead" and then defines this with the statement "rewarding your servants the prophets and saints and all who fear your name". The prophets and the saints will receive their reward when they are resurrected to eternal life. John mentions this right after mentioning the seventh trumpet being sounded. This directly matches what we read in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54. So, we can see that Revelation 11:15-18 is the point where the resurrection of the firstfruits will occur in the book of Revelation's order of events.

Later in Revelation 14 we see a picture of the Firstfruits in heaven with Jesus Christ before the throne of God the Father.

Rev 14:1-5

¹ Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ³ **They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders;** and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault **before the throne of God.**

We saw previously in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 that at the blowing of the seventh trumpet the firstfruits are changed into God beings and they rise to meet Christ in the clouds. We also saw that this event correlates with the events of Revelation 11:15-18. Here in Revelation 14, we see that after meeting Christ in the clouds, the firstfruits will proceed with Christ up to heaven and go before the throne of God the Father. This matches exactly with the two wave loaves being elevated and presented before the LORD (Lev 23:20). The books of Zechariah and 1 Thessalonians tell us about the firstfruits return back to the earth.

Zech 14:1-5

¹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ **Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.** ⁴ **And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east.** And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. ⁵ Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. **Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You.**

1 Thess 4:13

¹³ But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.**

So, we can see that the events surrounding the resurrection of the firstfruits are an exact match to the symbolism of the two wave loaves ceremony. In the two wave loaves ceremony the priest would elevate the two loaves upward to be presented before the LORD and then bring them back down again. When the firstfruits are resurrected they will mirror this symbolism. They will rise to meet Christ in the air then proceed on to heaven where they will be presented before the throne of God the Father and will later return with Jesus Christ back to the earth. This not only clearly reveals to us the meaning of the two wave loaves ceremony, but it also reveals the intimate connection between Pentecost and the resurrection of the firstfruits. We saw earlier the intimate connection between the wave sheaf ceremony and the two wave loaves ceremony. We also saw that Christ fulfilled the wave sheaf ceremony on the very day that the ceremony was commanded to be performed. Given this Biblical precedence, we can logically conclude that the resurrection of the firstfruits (the fulfillment of the two wave loaves ceremony) will occur on Pentecost.

The Feast Of Trumpets

For many decades the majority of Church of God organizations have taught that the first resurrection will take place on the Feast of Trumpets. In fact, many typically treat the Feast of Trumpets as if it is solely about the blowing of the seventh trumpet and the first resurrection. This teaching ignores the fact that the seventh trumpet is just the final trumpet in a series of seven trumpets that comprise the Day of the LORD (Rev 8, 9, 11, 15, 16). The Feast of Trumpets pictures the entire Day of the LORD which includes all seven of these trumpets. (For more information on this subject please see the paper entitled "The Meaning Of The Feast Of Trumpets".) The Day of the LORD is the time of God's wrath against mankind and it lasts for an entire year.

Isa 34:8

⁸ For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, **The year of recompense for the cause of Zion.**

The book of Revelation further illustrates this fact by telling us that the 5th trumpet alone lasts for five months.

Rev 9:1-5

¹ Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. ² And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. ³ Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were not given authority to kill them, **but to torment them for five months.**

Today in the Church of God, many fail to recognize the gap of time that is required between the events described in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, and Revelation 11:15-18 and the events described in Revelation 19:11-21. Often the assumption is made that the time frame between these events is merely a matter of minutes or hours. However, given the events described for us in Revelation 16 this is simply not a possibility. Revelation 16 tells us that all seven of the bowl plagues have to play out between the time of the resurrection and the time that Christ returns back to the earth to fight the armies of the beast.

The 6th bowl plague described for us in Revelation 16:12-15 tells us that the Euphrates River will be dried up to prepare the way for armies from the east to come down come down to fight “the battle of that great day of God Almighty”. The logistics involved in a sizable army preparing for war and moving across any significant distance to engage in a battle cannot be accomplished in a matter of minutes or hours. This requires weeks or months to take place. So, we can see that the events described in Revelation 16 require a significant gap of time to take place between the events of Revelation 11:15-18 and the events of Revelation 19:11-21. Most likely this time frame will be a matter of several months. While the Bible does not specifically tell us exactly how long this time frame is, it is the opinion of this author that the resurrection will take place on Pentecost and the return of Christ back to the earth will take place on the following Feast of Trumpets.

I base this conclusion on the fact that God has a consistent track record of fulfilling major events on Holy Days and specifically fulfilling events that a Holy Day pictures on the day that specifically pictures that event. As we saw previously in this paper, Christ fulfilled the wave sheaf on the very day the wave sheaf ceremony was commanded to be performed. This is just one of many examples that could be cited to illustrate this point. Given these examples and the fact that we are told that both God the Father and Jesus Christ do not change (Mal 3:6; Heb 13:8). It would appear very logical to conclude that they will remain consistent with their documented track record of behavior and will continue to repeat this pattern of behavior in the future.