

RESURRECTION OF FIRSTFRUITS: PENTECOST OR TRUMPETS?

Wil Berg, June 2021

Most Churches of God teach the resurrection of firstfruits is pictured by the fall holy day of Trumpets. Others teach the firstfruit resurrection will happen on or around the spring holy day of Pentecost (Greek = count fifty), which in Hebrew is the "Feast of Weeks" (Exodus 34:22).

All agree that these days are major parts of God's end time plan, that they are based on the yearly spring and fall harvest seasons, and that they are to be kept today with God's commandments and the other holy days (Exodus 23).

Because the time of the firstfruit resurrection is interpreted in two different ways, this paper closely examines the information the Bible gives about these two feast days – Pentecost and Trumpets.

The Day of Pentecost

The Feasts of the Lord (YHWH = God the Father) are explained in Leviticus 23. Included are the 7th day Sabbath (verse 3), the Passover (not designated as a holy convocation - verse 5), and details of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8; first and last days are holy convocations). Leviticus 23 then gives information pertaining to Pentecost (verses 9-22, NKJ unless indicated).

The word "firstfruits" is specifically referred to in verses 17 and 29. This is noteworthy because **Pentecost is the only holy day that mentions "firstfruits."**

Similarly, in Exodus 34:22 God commands, "And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat (grain) harvest".

It is also important to see that **these (spring) firstfruits of God the Father and the Lamb (Jesus Christ) are mentioned in association with the first resurrection** (Revelation 14:1-4). "And I heard a voice from heaven" (verse 2) . . . "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God [the Father] and to the Lamb" (verse 4).

As the initial firstfruit, Christ set the precedent. "But each one in his own order: Christ the [first of the] firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

Leviticus 23:11-12 describes the priest waving a prime firstfruit sheaf of grain before God the Father for it to be accepted by Him. This symbolized Jesus' resurrection and the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice and death. This occurred "on the day after the [weekly] Sabbath", within the days of unleavened bread that year.

Misunderstood Events

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 is traditionally interpreted as the resurrected saints meeting Christ in the air, and then returning with Him as He descends to the earth. However, this explanation goes beyond what is written (1 Corinthians 4:6).

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 explains that "the Lord Himself [= Jesus, John 14:3] will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God [= last trumpet, 1 Corinthians 15:52 = 7th angel sounding, Revelation 11:15]. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 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."

These verses DO NOT SAY that Jesus will descend to earth at the time of the first resurrection. What 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 tells us is that the dead in Christ will rise first, and “shall be caught up together with them (the other worthy firstfruits) in the clouds to MEET the Lord in the air.”

After Christ meets the firstfruit saints in the clouds, Revelation 14:1-4 and 15:2 show that He will take them up to the Father’s throne in heaven, where they will be protected from God’s 7 bowl plagues of wrath on the earth described in Revelation 16-19.

Other Firstfruits

The 144,000 and great multitude, along with the above firstfruits, will stand on the heavenly mount Zion (Hebrews 12:22) at God’s throne in heaven (Revelation 7 and chapter 14:1-4).

While leaven is understood as a type of sin during the days of unleavened bread, the two firstfruit leavened loaves of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:17, 20) should be understood differently.

The parable of Matthew 13:33 shows leaven is also likened to the kingdom of heaven. Applying this example of leaven to the two leavened loaves, these loaves could portray the future growth and expansion of the coming kingdom of God.

Further, Pentecost is not when the Holy Spirit was first given to the New Testament disciples, as Acts 2 has been historically interpreted. God gave His Spirit to those who saw and believed that Jesus had risen from the grave. This was done on the wave sheaf day of unleavened bread, 7 weeks before Pentecost (John 20:22).

The example of Acts 2 shows the miraculous empowerment of Jesus' disciples, that enabled them to speak boldly of Jesus' resurrection and its meaning, to visiting people from many nations, in their native languages (verses 4-11).

The rest of Acts 2 describes what they taught, and the need of repentance and baptism to receive the Holy Spirit (verse 38). Their preaching was so powerful and compelling that "about three thousand souls were added to them" (verse 41).

Acts 2 is also about Peter's verification of Jesus' resurrection, and how his listeners could become immortal like Jesus, by repenting and receiving the same power of the Holy Spirit that raised Jesus up from the dead. This chapter provides a window into early NT evangelism.

In summation, the scriptures and examples of this section show that Pentecost commemorates the spring harvest first resurrection of God's spiritual firstfruits.

The Day of Trumpets (Horn Blasts)

The meaning of The Day of Trumpets has long been blurred and confused by the King James translation of Leviticus 23:24 . . . "a memorial of blowing of trumpets".

Because of the word "trumpets", this has caused many to associate this day with the holy day of Trumpets, and the "last trumpet" that Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 15:52 (which is connected with the firstfruit resurrection).

However, notice that both the JPS and Schocken Bibles translate Leviticus 23:24 as "a memorial proclaimed with the blast of horns", and "a day of horn blasts" - Numbers 29:1). These more accurate

translations convey the description and meaning of the day of trumpets as "The Day of Blasting Horns", sounding great alarm and distress.

Consider also that the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52, (= the sounding of the Revelation 11:15 7th angel), signaling the time of the first resurrection, is SINGULAR. The many horns blasted on the day of horn blasting are PLURAL.

The time of the spring "single 7th horn" resurrection is separate and different from the fall blasting of many horns.

Not generally known, the KJV word "trumpets" in both Leviticus 23:24 and Numbers 29:1 is not in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew word used there is "**teruah**", which means "blowing". The King James translators used the word "trumpets" because they thought it was implied. But by itself, "**teruah**" does not reveal the kind of horn instruments that were blown.

For this information, Numbers 10:1-10 shows that silver horns (Hebrew = chatsotserah) were used to assemble and direct Israel, make loud trilling sounds when they went to war, and were blown during God's appointed feasts. These straight unvalved horns were blown by the priests on all the annual feast days (verse 8).

Additionally, the KJV Psalm 81:3-4 states, "Blow the trumpet [Hebrew "shofar" = ram's horn] at the time of the new Moon" (Numbers 29:1 – 7th month, 1st day = The Day of Blasting Horns). The ram's horn "shofar" was the second kind of wind instrument that was blown on The Day of Trumpets (Blasting Horns).

The Day of Blowing Horns occurs in late summer or early fall when the treading of grapes in a winepress is done.

People today think of a trumpet as a modern metal musical instrument of cylindrical bore with three valves that enable it to play all the notes of a musical scale. The OT wind instruments used on the holy days were different from those today. They were limited and could sound only a few notes.

The Time of Great Destruction

The first resurrection and firstfruits are never mentioned in scriptures related to the Day of Trumpets. Instead, this day of blowing horns pictures a very different time of alarm, distress, and great destruction.

Harper's Bible Dictionary explains in its article VINE, page 1113: "Wine was produced by treading [by foot] the grapes in a large vat connected to a smaller, lower vat by a channel . . . **God's judgment of the wicked is like the treading of a winepress** (Isa. 63:1-3; Rev. 14:18-20)".

Isaiah 63:1-4 speaks of One coming in His glory and the "greatness of His strength", clothed in garments "like one who treads in the winepress. I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me. For I have trodden them in My anger and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled on My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come" (see also Isaiah 34:8 and 61:2).

The context of Isaiah 63 identifies this person as God the Father (verses 11, 16). It describes the gathering of the world "to the battle of the great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:14).

These scriptures depict the coming day of Jehovah's wrath, which starts with the trumpet plagues that precede the first resurrection

(Revelation 6:17 and chapters 8 through 11). This climaxes later with the 7 bowl plagues of Revelation 16, and the treading of “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15).

Jeremiah 25:15-38 also speaks of this end time winepress. “Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them . . . I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth, says the Lord of hosts . . . He will give a shout, as those who tread the grapes . . . And at that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end if the earth”.

The birds and beasts of the field will feast on the carcasses of this great destruction and carnage (Revelation 19:17-18, 21).

Other Clarifications

With some occasional digressions, the book of Revelation is largely sequential in order. After the 7th trumpet blows and the first resurrection occurs (Revelation 11:15), and before the 7 last bowl plagues begin (Revelation 16), the third angel of Revelation 14 tells those who worship the beast that they will “**drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out FULL STRENGTH into the cup of his indignation**” (verse 10).

In contrast, the earlier first four trumpet plagues will be poured out on the earth one-third strength (Revelation 8).

Revelation 14:14-15 goes on to describe, “One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle . . . thrust in your sickle and reap . . . for the harvest of the earth is ripe”.

Verses 18-19 continue, "And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire . . . thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God".

Notice also that the Revelation 16 seven bowl reaping and crushing devastation takes place when BOTH God the Father and His Son come down to earth to fight the climactic battle of Jehoshaphat (Armageddon) – Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:11ff.

"Let the nations be awakened, and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the wine press is full, the vats overflow - for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:12-13).

From all this, The Day of Blowing Horns teaches that disobedience to God and His laws reaps devastating end time consequences.

"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

Post Script:

As a secondary matter of interest, a confusing detail appears in 1 Corinthians 15:52 and Revelation 8 concerning the word "trumpet". The common Greek word for trumpet is "salpinx", but Paul and John used the word "salpiggos".

Music historian M.L. West writes, "The Greek trumpet (salpinx) . . . was generally of bronze" Ancient Greek Music, Clarendon Press Oxford, 1992,

page 118. The Greek horn was similar in design to Israel's "chatsotserah" horn of silver, but was different by being made of bronze.

The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (BDAG) defines "salpiggos" (the Greek word used by Paul and John) as "1, a wind instrument used esp. for communication; 2, the sound made or signal given by a trumpet [horn], trumpet-call, trumpet sound".

The BDAG definition does not mention bronze and can apply to either Israel's silver trumpet, or its ram's horn "shofar". This seems to be the reason why Paul and John used the word "salpiggos" instead of "salpinx".