

The Rapture, Part 2

We have seen that the Rapture is the removal of the Bride of Christ (the Church) from Earth *before* the start of the Tribulation. The Church will be undergoing its “evaluation” for rewards in Heaven, while the Tribulation occurs on Earth. According to Daniel 9, the Tribulation relates to Israel and represents their final discipline for rejecting their Messiah as preparation for God to bring believing Israel into the promised Kingdom. It is also God’s judgment on an unbelieving Gentile world.

God has a plan that started with Adam's fall. He intends to recover everything lost by Adam, as shown through the dispensations. He has also revealed His plan directly to Israel and the Church through the Feasts of the Lord. As we will see, the Feasts of the Lord also point to the general timing of the Rapture.

The Feasts of the Lord

The Feasts of the Lord were given to Israel as part of the Mosaic Covenant. They consist of seven observances or feasts that Israel was commanded to observe each year. These seven feasts carried special meanings for Israel and served as a way for God to teach Israel about Himself and His plan. They vividly illustrate God’s plan of redemption and include prophecy. The Hebrew word for “feasts” (*moadim*) literally means “appointed times.” Think of them as depicting “appointed times” for events represented by the feasts to occur.

The Jewish Calendar

The Jews have two calendars: a religious calendar and a civil calendar. Both are based on a lunar year rather than a solar year like ours. The religious calendar year starts in the spring on the first day of the month of Nisan, which can fall in March or April on our Gregorian calendar. Their civil calendar year begins seven months later on Tishri 1, which falls in September or October in our Gregorian calendar. Because their months are about 29.5 days long, their year is 11 days shorter than ours. To compensate for this 11-day difference, an extra month is occasionally added.

There are seven Feasts of the Lord, divided into spring and fall feasts. The spring feasts include Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost. All are connected to the spring grain harvests. As we will see, the spring feasts also relate to and speak of the First Advent of the Messiah.

The fall feasts are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles (Booths). These mainly relate to the fruit harvests in the fall. These fall feasts symbolize the Second Coming.

The first spring feast, Passover, marks the beginning of the religious calendar year. The first fall feast, Rosh Hashanah, starts the civil calendar year. While I will briefly deal with all the feasts, my main focus will be on Rosh Hashanah because it is also connected to the Rapture.

The Feast of Passover (Pesach)

Looking back, Passover marks the final plague inflicted on Pharaoh for his refusal to release the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It commemorates God's delivery of the children of Israel from bondage. They were saved by applying the blood of a sacrificial lamb to the doorposts of their homes and demonstrating faith that the blood would protect them from the death angel, as God promised (Exodus 12:1-20). Looking forward, and spiritually speaking, this event symbolizes the Messiah and how those who believe in Him are freed from the bondage of sin and the rule of Satan in their lives. The Cross was on Passover. Just as the first Passover signified the Israelites' release from Egyptian slavery, Christ's death signifies our liberation from sin.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately follows Passover, and they are so closely connected that many see them as one long celebration. For seven days, Israel was to eat nothing with leaven (Leviticus 23:5-8). Looking back, this symbolizes their hurried departure from Egypt, where they didn't have time to add leaven to their bread and let it rise. The absence of leaven also makes the bread denser, allowing them to carry more of it. In Scripture, leaven is often used as a symbol of sin. Leaving it behind represents their freedom from Egypt's bondage, which also signifies freedom from sin.

Hag HaMatzah (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) is a seven-day celebration dedicated to the Lord. It was seven days after leaving Egypt that the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, leading to the destruction of the Egyptian army, which finally allowed the Israelites to pause long enough to bake bread with leaven.

The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread are closely connected to Israel's deliverance from slavery. They symbolize how individual believers are freed from the bondage of sin. Passover represents being born again, while Unleavened Bread speaks of being delivered through life's trials and tribulations, based on obedience and removing "leaven" from our lives to be positioned to receive His grace.

The Feast of First Fruits (*Bikkurim*)

First Fruits is observed three days after Passover, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. When the ripe barley and wheat were ready to be harvested, the celebrant would take one sheaf from the standing harvest called "the sheaf of the first fruits" and bring it to the priest. The priest would then wave this sheaf before the Lord in His house (Leviticus 23:9-14). The first fruits were always the choicest of all that was to follow and were considered holy to the Lord. Everything on earth, including both humans and animals, was to be presented before the Lord as first fruits to Him. The theme of the festival of First Fruits is about resurrection and salvation.

The festival of the sheaf of the first fruits symbolically predicts the resurrection of Jesus. *Yeshua* was slain on the cross during Passover, and He rose from the grave three days and nights after His death, on the day of the Feast of First Fruits. Jesus is called the first fruits of those who rise from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). The Feast of First Fruits pointed forward to the Messiah's resurrection as the first of the resurrected righteous.

The Festival of Pentecost (*Shavuot*)

The last feast in the spring series is Pentecost, celebrated 50 days after First Fruits (Deuteronomy 16:9-12). The main theme of Pentecost is God revealing Himself to mankind. The first time God revealed Himself was to Israel at the initial Pentecost at Mt. Sinai, and then 1500 years later in Jerusalem when the Church received the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The purpose of giving the Law was to demonstrate humanity's total inability to achieve righteousness on their own, thereby emphasizing the need for a savior. It served as the way God revealed His complete righteousness and His nature to Israel, and ultimately to all mankind through Israel's witness.

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the hearts and lives of all believers (Acts 1:8; 2:1-18; Luke 24:49; Joel 2:28-29; Exodus 19:16; Isaiah 44:3; Deuteronomy 16:5-6,16; 2 Kings 21:4). Church Age believers associate Pentecost with the start of the Church Age because it marks a clear dividing line when God transitioned from dealing with Israel to the Church due to Israel's rejection of the Messiah. For the Church, Pentecost signifies God's revealing Himself through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

To sum up the spring feasts, they serve as a representation or type illustrating the first advent of Christ. The actual events of the First Advent occurred on the exact feast days that symbolized them. As we will see, the fall feasts represent the Second Advent of Christ, and we should expect that the events they depict will indeed happen on the exact feast day they symbolize.

The Fall Feasts

At Pentecost 30 AD, God ceased dealing with Israel and began dealing with the Church. According to the dispensational view of Daniel 9 and the 70 weeks prophecy, the remaining time God had set for Israel was 70 weeks of 7 years, totaling 490 years. Four hundred and eighty-three of those years are accounted for up to the Cross. The final seven years, the seventieth week, are described as a time of judgment.

Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! for that day *is* great, so that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

Isaac's son Jacob was renamed Israel by God, and in this passage, he symbolizes the nation of Israel. The passage refers to the Tribulation as the "time of Jacob's Trouble," but the events vividly depicted in Revelation have not yet occurred. Israel's rejection of the King and, consequently, the Kingdom caused a disruption of Daniel's timeline before those 490 years were completed. With the last 7 years remaining, the Church Age was

inserted, and the Church was offered the Kingdom. God temporarily stopped dealing with Israel and focused on the Church, also called the “Bride of Christ.” After the Church is raptured, the seven-year Tribulation (Daniel’s seventieth week) will begin, and God will resume dealing with Jacob (Israel). Remember, the entire 490 years, including the Tribulation period, are directed toward Daniel’s people (Daniel 9:24), which means Israel.

Prophetically, the spring feasts were fulfilled with the First Advent. Similarly, the fall feasts of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Tabernacles serve as pictures of events related to the Second Advent.

Rosh Hashanah – The Season of Teshuvah

While the first fall feast, Rosh Hashanah (Numbers 29:1-6), falls on the first of Tishri (the first day of the seventh month), traditionally, the events leading up to it start 30 days earlier on the first of Elul. This special month-long season is known as *Teshuvah* by the Jews. In Hebrew, it means “to return or repent,” and it begins on the first day of Elul and continues for 40 days, ending after Rosh Hashanah with the Feast of *Yom Kippur*. Thirty days into *Teshuvah*, on Tishri 1, comes *Rosh Hashanah*. This launches a final ten-day period ending with *Yom Kippur*. In Jewish tradition and literature, this 10-day span is called the “High Holy Days” and also known as the “Awesome Days” (*Yamim Nora'im*, the “days of awe”).

Teshuvah (repentance) speaks to all people. Those who believe in the Messiah are encouraged to evaluate their lives and identify where they have strayed from God. It is a call to study the Scriptures and review the evidence that the Messiah is who He claims to be. The entire month of Elul is a 30-day period dedicated to personal reflection and repentance in preparation for the upcoming High Holy Days.

As a feast day given to Israel, God is calling the nation of Israel to personal repentance and salvation. The shofar is blown after every morning service. The message from Elul 1 to Rosh Hashanah is to repent before Rosh Hashanah, or you will find yourself in the Days of Awe.

Rosh in Hebrew means “chief” or “head,” and *shanah* means “year.” Rosh Hashanah is the “head of the year” and marks the start of the civil calendar year. According to the Talmud, which is a collection of rabbinic

commentaries on the Jewish Scriptures, the world was created on this day.

Yom HaKeseh: The Hidden Day

Technically, Rosh Hashanah is a one-day celebration but is observed for two days—the first and second days of the Hebrew month of Tishri, which is the first month of the civil calendar. It usually occurs in September or October according to our Gregorian calendar. In 2025, Rosh Hashanah falls on September 23 and 24. It begins at sunset on September 22 and continues until sundown on September 24. This spans three days on the Gregorian calendar but only two days on the Jewish calendar, where days are counted from sunset to sunset.

Rosh Hashanah starts on *Rosh Chodesh*, the new moon itself. It cannot be celebrated until the new moon appears. Since it marks the beginning of the year, it is important to get it right! The rabbinical court in Jerusalem determines the exact time by personally observing the first sliver of the New Moon. Weather conditions or daylight can make it difficult to identify the New Moon, and once it is officially observed, even in Jerusalem, it's hard to inform everyone promptly that the New Year has begun. To address this, a two-day Rosh Hashanah was observed even in Israel. In rabbinic tradition, these two days are considered one long day.

Rosh Hashanah is the only holiday that isn't known for certain in advance and is celebrated based on an observed event – the appearance of the new moon. Therefore, another name for Rosh Hashanah is *Yom HaKeseh*, "The Day of the Hiding" or "the Hidden Day" or "the day that no man knows."

In Matthew 24:36, Jesus said of His return, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." This statement by Jesus is believed to be an idiom for *Rosh Hashanah*. This aligns with the idea that the day or the hour of the Lord's return and the Rapture will not be known in advance, emphasizing the call for watchfulness and repentance associated with this feast and our understanding of the Rapture.

Rosh Hashanah is called Yom Teruah in the Torah, *meaning* the Day of the Sounding of the *Shofar* or the Day of the Awakening Blast. *Teruah*

translates to "an awakening blast." The main theme of Rosh Hashanah is "to awake." *Teruah* is also understood as "shout." The ultimate shout is at the Rapture, as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout..."

The shofar blown on Rosh Hashanah is called the "Last Trumpet," a term the apostle Paul mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:52. The Last Trumpet mentioned there does not refer to the seventh (and last) trumpet judgment in Revelation, as some believe. When 1 Corinthians was written, Revelation, with its reference to the trumpet judgments, was decades away from being written by John, so a reference to a yet unrevealed event would have been meaningless to the early readers of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. The "Last Trumpet" of the First Corinthians passage must refer to the "Last Trumpet" of Rosh Hashanah.

At the sounding of the Last Trumpet, the believers in the Messiah who are righteous, that is, have the imputed righteousness of Christ granted at salvation, will be taken to Heaven in the Rapture along with the righteous Church Age believers who died.

Whether it is by the blast of a *shofar* or the force of a supernatural shout, God's goal is to awaken us! The theme of awakening from sleep can also be found in John 11:11; Romans 13:11; Daniel 12:1-2; Psalms 78:65; and Isaiah 51:9.

Another name for Rosh Hashanah is *Yom HaDin*, the Day of Judgment. Judgment is connected to Rosh Hashanah. Those who do not repent during the *Teshuvah* period will face God's judgment on Earth during the Tribulation. The raptured righteous believers will face their Bema judgment or evaluation in Heaven. Unbelievers who remain behind in the Tribulation after the Rapture have until Yom Kippur to decide for Christ, or their fate is forever sealed.

Another theme and term associated with Rosh Hashanah in Hebrew is *HaMelech* (the King). On Rosh Hashanah, the coronation of the Messiah as King will take place in Heaven (Revelation 5). Yeshua, who came to Earth during His first coming to play the role of the suffering Messiah, *Messiah ben Joseph*, will be crowned as King over all the Earth in preparation for His return to reign as King Messiah (*Messiah ben David*) during the Kingdom age, the Millennium (Revelation 19:16; 20:4).

The gates of Heaven are said to open on Rosh Hashanah, according to Isaiah 26:2 and Psalm 118:19-20. John states in the Book of Revelation, "After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet ..." [Rosh Hashanah - last trump] "... And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne ..." This marks the coronation of the Messiah. The coronation ceremony is described in Revelation 4:1-2 and chapter 5.

The description in Revelation aligns with the account in Daniel 7:9-14. The gates of Heaven open on Rosh Hashanah so the righteous nations can enter (Isaiah 26:2; Psalm 118:19-20). "Righteous nations" is a reference to Gentile believers and clearly points to the Church associated with Rosh Hashanah. This tells us that the Rapture of believers in Christ will occur on or near Rosh Hashanah. We are told that no one knows the day or the hour of Christ's return, but remember, the exact date of Rosh Hashanah isn't known until the new moon appears.

Review

Rosh Hashanah exhibits all the traits we would associate with the start of the Tribulation. That includes:

1. It's perfect alignment (and that of the feasts that follow) with the practice of Middle Eastern arranged marriages mentioned in Scripture.
2. The Rapture of the church and the removal of the bride to the room prepared for her by the Bridegroom in His Father's house.
3. The bridegroom does not enter the bride's house.
4. The "shout" or calling out of the bride
5. And the start of the seven days of the honeymoon away from the guests.
6. The Jewish tradition of the so-called "Last Trumpet" is linked to this feast day, and Paul mentions it specifically in First Corinthians.
7. The day and hour of the observance or Rosh Hashanah are unknown and depend on the observed appearance of the new moon.
8. Israel viewed Rosh Hashanah as the last opportunity for repentance, or they could end up in the "days of awe," which is the Tribulation.

9. The closing of Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the “days of awe” or high holy days, when Israelites find themselves in the midst of the “birth pains” of the coming of the Messiah.

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

The next feast day is Yom Kippur, as referenced in Leviticus 16:1-34. It is the only day of the year when the High Priest, and only the High Priest, is permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies behind the veil in the Temple (Leviticus 16:2; Hebrews 9:3,7). On this day, the sins of Israel are “atoned for,” a term that means “covered.” The idea is that the blood of the sacrifices on that day covers or hides the sins of Israel, both corporately and individually, from God’s view. These sins are hidden for just one year, and the ritual must be performed again 12 months later, year after year after year. This serves as a picture of what Christ would do on the Cross, but once and for all.

It is observed ten days after Rosh Hashanah on Tishri 10, the tenth day of the seventh month, and it is a day of fasting and spiritual reflection (Leviticus 23:27; Numbers 29:7). Why ten days? Why not seven, if this period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur represents the seven-year Tribulation? Because the number 10 is associated with human government, and this is a time when human authority is completely out of control (Daniel 7:24; Revelation 17:12). For the Jewish people, the number 10 also signifies a legal congregation known as a *minyan*, or one body that can represent a group. Therefore, the number 10 symbolizes both the nations and the congregation of Israel (Leviticus 16:2-3,17,19).

The Great Shofar

There are three primary *shofarim* (trumpets) for the Jewish people. These three trumpets are:

- "The First Trump" is blown and associated with *Pentecost*;
- "The Last Trump" is blown and associated with *Rosh Hashanah*;
- "The Great Trump" is blown and associated with *Yom Kippur*.

The Great Trumpet is called the *Shofar Hagadol* in Hebrew (Isaiah 27:13 and Matthew 24:31). Some translations use the word “great,” while others say “loud.”

The biblical name for the Day of Atonement is *Yom Hakippurim*, meaning "the day of covering, canceling, pardon, and reconciliation." Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for us and paid the ransom for us (Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23).

The Greek word *hilasmos*, translated as "propitiation," shares the same meaning as the Hebrew word *kaphar*, which is translated as "atonement" (Romans 3:23-25; 1 John 2:2; 4:9-10).

The purpose of the Day of Atonement was to teach us about Yeshua, who is our atonement and who ransomed us from the bondage of sin with His life (Hebrews 10:1-10).

Neilah: The Closing of the Gates of Heaven

The last *Yom Kippur* ceremony is called *neilah*, the closing of the Gates of Heaven, and is the concluding ceremony to *Yom Kippur*. At this point, it is too late to make a decision to accept Yeshua the Messiah into your life. It is the Jewish traditional belief that the gates of Heaven open on Rosh Hashanah to let the righteous in and remain open until the *neilah* service of *Yom Kippur*. Until the final blast of the *Shofar Hagadol* (the Great Trumpet) is heard at the end of the *neilah* service, there is still a chance for repentance and entering the Kingdom.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) concludes the sacred festivals of the seventh month and symbolizes the Kingdom (Millennium). Unlike the somber tone of Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, this third feast of *Tishrei* is a time of joy. *Sukkot* is known as the "Season of Our Joy" because, after a season of repentance and the redemption experienced on *Yom Kippur*, believers find joy in knowing their sins are forgiven and the joy of walking with God, understanding Him, and being obedient to Him.

Historically, *Sukkot* commemorates the days in the wilderness of Sinai after leaving Egypt, when God protected, led, and sustained the children of Israel. This period symbolizes the Millennium because the people in the wilderness experienced a supernatural environment. Their covering was the cloud (Exodus 16:10; 19:1,9,16; 24:12-16; 40:35-38). Spiritually, this is known as the immersion (baptism) into the cloud (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). The cloud served as a shelter and protection by day and as a pillar of fire

by night—providing warmth, light, and safety. During this feast, celebrants take residence in a “booth” or temporary dwelling.

The *sukkah* or booth represents man's reliance on God for food, water, and shelter. Our booth is the physical body, a temporary home for our souls and spirits (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Our food is the Word of God (Matthew 6:11; 4:4; John 6:33-35), which cleanses, rinses, and washes our lives (Ephesians 5:26). The shelter of God's protection covers us from the evil one (Matthew 6:13; Psalm 91).

Sukkot (Tabernacles) marks the final harvest before winter. It is called *Hag Hasif*, the Festival of Ingathering. The granaries, threshing floors, and wine and olive presses are full. The farmer feels happy and excited, so *Sukkot* is also called "The Season of Rejoicing."

Sukkot symbolizes the great harvest of believers coming out of the Tribulation (Matthew 13:39-43). The largest evangelistic effort in history will be carried out by 144,000 anointed members from the tribes of Israel, who will proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom through *Yeshua HaMashiach* (Revelation 14:1-7). Mortal believers who accepted Christ as their personal Savior and survived the seven-year Tribulation will be among the guests at the wedding feast, invited by the Father of the Bridegroom.

It is also known as the Feast of Dedication because King Solomon dedicated the temple during *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) (1 Kings 8:2).

Another name for the Feast of Tabernacles is the Feast of the Nations because it will be celebrated by all the nations on Earth during the Millennium (Zechariah 14:16-18). This refers back to God's promise in Genesis 12:3, as it is written, "...all families of the earth [shall] be blessed [through his seed]." That promise was fulfilled through Jesus, the Messiah, as stated in Galatians 3:8,14,16,29.

The Festival of Lights (The Light of the Temple)

Another ceremony during the Feast of *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) was the lighting of the temple (*Beit HaMikdash*). According to the *Mishnah* (oral law), at the end of the first day of the Feast of *Sukkot*, the priests and Levites went down to the court of the women. Four massive golden candlesticks, each 50 cubits tall, were set up in the court with four golden bowls on top of them and four ladders leaning against each candlestick.

Four youths of priestly descent stood at the top of the ladders, holding jars with about 7.5 gallons of pure oil, which they poured into each bowl (*Mishnah, Sukkah 5:2*).

The wicks were made from strips of the worn-out liturgical garments of the priests, also known as "swaddling clothes." The light coming from the four candelabras was so bright that the Mishnah states in Sukkah 5:3 that there was no courtyard in Jerusalem that was not illuminated.

Spiritually speaking, the light represented the *Shekinah* glory that once filled the temple where God's presence dwelt in the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8:10-11; Ezekiel 43:5). During this time, the temple was seen as "the light of the world." In the brilliance of this gloriously lit temple, Jesus proclaimed in John 8:12 that He was "*the light of the world*." Israel was chosen to be God's light to the world (Deuteronomy 7:6-8) in service to God.

Israel will be used by God, as the nation will play a central role in the thousand-year reign of the Messiah (Isaiah 62:1-5). During this time, Israel will be a blessing to all nations (Malachi 3:12; Ezekiel 34:23-30; Zechariah 8:11-15; Isaiah 19:23-25). Jerusalem will serve as the spiritual center of the world, marking Israel's "Golden Age" during the Messianic era because the King of Jerusalem, the Prince of Peace, will reign in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-4; 52:9-10; 62:7-8; Micah 4:1-3; Psalm 102:18-21; 125:1-2; 137:5-6). The day is coming when a restored and renewed Israel will once again serve as a light to the nations, for Israel's destiny is intertwined with that of the world!

Summary

While *Rosh HaShanah* speaks of the removal of believers before God returns to deal with Israel and an unrepentant world. The High Holy Days (Days of Awe) between *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur* speak of the judgments occurring on Israel and a world that refuses to repent and hates God. *Yom Kippur* marks the final judgment on Israel and the nations, as well as the deliverance of the surviving remnant of believers from the Tribulation. Christ the Judge will separate His sheep from the goats, and only His Own will enter the promised Kingdom.

The question for each of us is, will you be counted with the Bride? If you're unsure, then the answer is probably no. How can you be counted as part

of the Bride of Christ? The answer is simple. Romans tells us it is not by works of righteousness that we are saved. Isaiah says our righteousness is “filthy rags,” and the Hebrew word refers to menstrual rags. Galatians explains that if we could contribute to our salvation, then Christ died in vain.

Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Grace is unmerited favor—something we don’t deserve! Faith is trusting in something, and in this case, it’s trusting that Christ was judged for our sins so we won’t be judged. Salvation is a gift (grace = free) that doesn’t come from our works. If it did, we could boast about it, but we can’t because we had nothing to do with earning it or keeping it. If you could lose your salvation, you would. God offers the free gift of salvation to those who trust in what Christ did on the Cross. It’s that simple!