

# Summer in Bible Prophecy

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WITH summer in full swing and biblical signs manifesting all around, it's a fitting time to review some of the scriptures linking the season of sunshine and warm temperatures to the end of the age.

Let's begin by defining what "summer" specifically refers to in the Bible. While our calendar divides the year into four seasons—spring, summer, fall, and winter—the Bible mentions only two main seasons: summer and winter.

"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease" (Gen. 8:22).

"It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter" (Ps. 74:17).

Biblically, summer begins at the vernal equinox in March and ends at the autumnal equinox in September. Winter runs the opposite, beginning in September and ending in March. Therefore, to be precise, spring is not a distinct season but, rather, merely the first part of the summer. Likewise, autumn is not a distinct season but, rather, the first part of winter. The June and December solstices, marking the beginning of summer and winter on our calendars, actually represent the midpoint of the respective seasons.

Having defined the biblical boundaries of summer, let's consider some scriptures that point to this season being a pivotal time in Bible prophecy.

## SUMMER AND THE CHURCH

In Matthew, Jesus uses summer as a metaphor for the end of the age:\*

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near" (Matt. 24:32).

Considering God's propensity to fulfill His word to the letter, even the metaphors, a reasonable expectation is that the event marking the end of the Church Age will occur in the summer.

In the Book of Ruth, summer is the backdrop for the redemption of a Gentile bride via marriage to a Jewish redeemer—a picture of the wedding of the Church to Messiah. Interestingly, some speculate that Ruth's wedding may have occurred on or around the Jewish holiday Tu B'Av in the July-August

timeframe. Scripture records that Ruth lived with her mother-in-law, Naomi, until all of the wheat harvest was complete (Ruth 2:21-23). Tu B'Av traditionally marks the beginning of the grape harvest and, therefore, an unofficial conclusion to the wheat harvest. This, presumably, is when Ruth would have stopped living with her mother-in-law to take up residence with her new husband.

In Proverbs, summer is a time of gathering and storing up of crops:

“He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son” (Prov. 10:5).

“Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer” (Prov. 30:25).

The gathering and storing of summer crops foreshadows the harvest and gathering of the Church into heaven at the end of the age.

Reminding us of the Lord's warnings to not be found sleeping at His return, summer is said to be the worst time to be caught dozing:

“He who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son” (Prov. 10:5).

It's shameful to be caught sleeping during summer because the grain must be harvested and processed prior to the rainy season that begins after the autumnal equinox. Notice in Leviticus the fields are reaped *before* the first festival of the seventh month, Yom Teruah, arrives:

“When you reap the harvest of your land [in summer], do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest .... [Later] on the first day of the seventh month, you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts” (Lev. 23:22, 23).

Finally, the well known rapture typology in Song of Solomon connects summertime to the Church. The seasonal cues in Song 2:11-13 establish a general window of time for the shepherd's coming to gather and spirit away his beloved Shulammite/Gentile maid. The window opens when the “winter is passed and the rains are over and gone” and closes around grape harvest time, when “the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.”

## SUMMER AND ISRAEL

While summer in general is associated with the Church, the *end* of the season—the time when figs and olives are harvested—bears significance for Israel. For instance, in Amos, a basket of fruit that has ripened over the summer is a symbol of Israel being ripe for judgment:

“This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of summer fruit ... Then the LORD said to me, ‘The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer’” (Amos 8:1, 2).

In Jeremiah, the Jews lament the passing of the summer harvest:

“The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20).

While the context of the verse is an ancient judgment, Jeremiah may also be alluding to a future time when Israel sees the Church rescued via the Rapture and comes to the painful realization that they are not saved.

In Micah, summer is when the upright people have been swept from the land:

“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” (Mic. 7:1-2).

The empty (harvested) vineyard is indicative of summer’s end. A post-rapture world is typified as the only people who remain on the earth are wicked and looking to shed blood.

## CONCLUSION

Some consider the days *after* the autumnal equinox, specifically the fall feasts, the most likely time for the Rapture. In view of the abovementioned typologies and harvest times, however—not to mention the fact that Jesus says no man or angel knows the day of His coming—one is wise to keep watch during the summer.

“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn” (Mark 13:35).

## NOTES:

\*Some propose that Matthew 24 is addressed solely to Israel and, therefore, has no bearing on the Church Age or Rapture. It’s important to understand, however, that even though Jesus’ immediate audience in Matthew 24 was Jewish (disciples), they were also the founding members of the Church. Granted, the Church Age had not yet technically begun (Acts 2), but the Church’s existence had been revealed prior (Matt. 16:18). It’s, therefore entirely appropriate that the Lord would address issues pertaining to the Church in the discourse of Matthew 24. One way it’s obvious Matthew 24 addresses the Church Age is the described conditions on earth at the time of Jesus’

appearing. The Noah and Lot illustrations in Matthew and Luke (24:37-41; 17:26-29) picture the world in a state of normalcy. People are going about the mundane activities of life: eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, and building, right up to the moment judgment falls on them unexpectedly. The business-as-usual environment in the Noah and Lot illustrations cannot be harmonized with the Bible's description of the world just prior to the Second Coming. By this time, the earth has been utterly burned up and laid to waste. Humanity has perished to the point that men have become scarcer than gold (Isa. 13:9-13; 24; Rev. 16:1-11). This means the destruction and escape likened to the days of Noah in Matthew and Luke must pertain to a different appearing of the Lord occurring well *before* the Second Coming. Jesus knew, by way of the Holy Spirit guiding Him, that His appearing was to be a dual event (Rapture/Second Coming). In order to give a proper answer to the disciples' question concerning His return without revealing the mystery of the Rapture, He spoke in terms that address both the Rapture *and* the Second Coming. This is what we're seeing in Matthew 24: a picture of the Church Age and its conclusion after a 2,000-year period of "tribulation" (Rev. 1:9) and also a picture of the time of Jacob's Trouble, i.e. "great" Tribulation, and its conclusion (Matt. 24:21).