

# ***THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS AND THE RETURN OF JESUS***

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS’” (Revelation 19:11-16)

“Now in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall also have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. It will be to you a day for blowing trumpets” (Numbers 29:1)

Few people see the connection between these verses. Revelation 19 describes the return of Jesus. In the book of Numbers, God commanded the Israelites to observe the *Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets*. How does an ancient Hebraic festival (Leviticus 23:24-25; Numbers 29:1) relate to the return of Jesus?

Many Christians fail to find the relevancy in God’s Holy Days and Festivals (Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16, etc.). They are quaint festivals that apply only to the Jewish people, or that Jesus nailed to His stake. “After all,” they ask, “what can an ancient festival possibly mean to a Christian living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?”

## **Jesus, our Passover**

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For *Christ our Passover* also has been sacrificed. ***Therefore let us celebrate the feast***, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:6-8). This is an amazing scripture for two reasons:

- 1 Paul labels Jesus Christ as “our Passover.” He thus uses an ancient Holy Day to describe the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus on the stake; and
- 2 Paul urges a gentile church in Corinth, Greece to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follows Passover. In other words, he’s urging gentiles to keep a so-called Jewish or Hebraic Festival.

In urging gentiles to observe an Hebraic Festival, Paul is thus turning on its head the modern Christian belief that Jesus nailed the Law of God (including the Holy Days and Festivals) to His stake. He did no such thing: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19). Heaven and earth haven’t passed away; according to Jesus, neither have God’s laws, Holy Days and Festivals.

By calling Jesus “our Passover,” Paul demonstrated the Christian relevance of God’s Holy Days and Festivals, as found throughout the Old Testament. Elsewhere, Paul writes, “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a *festival* or a new moon or Sabbaths, *which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*” (Colossians 2:16-17). Here Paul described the Festivals as “shadow(s) of things to come...” In other words, the Festivals and Holy Days foreshadow, or predict, certain significant events. The Passover foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus “our Passover.” What, then, do the other Holy Days and Festivals foreshadow?

### **The Holy Days and Festivals: their ancient meaning**

Over a thousand years before Christ, God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Afterward God revealed His Festivals and Holy Days, which occur during the spring, summer, and fall harvests. “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The *feasts of the LORD*, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, *these are My feasts*’” (Leviticus 23:1). Notice that they’re not Jewish or Hebraic feasts; rather, they are God’s feasts.

These Holy Days and Festivals reminded the Israelites that:

- 1 God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt (*Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread*);
- 2 God had blessed them (the *Feast of Firstfruits, or Weeks*);
- 3 God will protect them when they’re in battle, and He has provided them with special events throughout the year, announced by the blowing of *shofars* or trumpets (hence the *Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets*);
- 4 God will forgive them when they repent of their sins (*Day of Atonement*); and

- 5 God provided for them during their forty-year trek in the wilderness, and will continue to do so (*Feast of Tabernacles* and the day immediately following this Feast, hereinafter referred to as the *Last Great Day*).

God chose the Israelites for the following reasons:

- 1 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but *because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers*, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). God chose Israel because He loved them, and because of His promise to Abraham, who obeyed His laws (Genesis 26:5);
- 2 Israel served as a vehicle in God’s plan to redeem mankind. The prophesied Messiah (Jesus) would come through Israel; and
- 3 God wanted to preserve His laws: “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1-2)

Preservation of the Law (including the Holy Days and Festivals) through the Israelites had two purposes: (i) obviously the Law of God would be kept alive among mankind, and (ii) by obeying these laws, Israel would serve as an example to other nations: “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deuteronomy 4:5-6). The law of God, the seventh-day Sabbath, and the *Holy Days and Festivals*, would be magnified through an obedient Israel. Unfortunately, rarely was Israel obedient to God.

The Law of God and the Holy Days and Festivals would shine through an obedient Israel. Therefore, the significance of God’s Holy Days and Festivals transcended boundaries. They are also timeless: they reveal the plan of God, which has unfolded over several thousands of years.

### **The Ancient Festival of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets**

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD’” (Leviticus 23:23-24).

The *Passover* and the festivals of *Unleavened Bread* and *Tabernacles* commemorated, respectively, Israel’s deliverance from slavery, its exodus from Egypt, and its forty-year trek in the wilderness. The *Feast of Firstfruits* and *Day of Atonement* reminded them of, respectively,

God's blessings and their sins and need for His mercy. What, then, did the *Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets* signify?

The Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets lacks specificity. In other words, the other Holy Days and Festivals commemorated certain events or served as reminders of God's blessings. However, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets is untied to past events, and its significance is not readily apparent.

Its significance, however, can be gleaned from the utilitarian purpose of blowing trumpets: "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God" (Numbers 10:9-10).

God instructed the Israelites to use trumpets to announce momentous events, such as going to war, and to announce the onset of Holy Days and Festivals. *The significance of blowing trumpets, therefore, resides specifically in their use.* The Israelites would use trumpets to announce war or the onset of the Holy Days and Festivals. Prophetically, God will use trumpets to announce the plagues mentioned in Revelation, the first resurrection, and the return of Jesus.

### **The Holy Days and Festivals: their prophetic significance**

People could not have understood the prophetic significance of the Holy Days and Festivals before Jesus' sacrifice in 31 AD. Only then did the apostles realize that, for example, the ancient Passover foreshadowed Jesus' death: hence Paul's designation, "Christ our Passover." They also realized the prophetic significance of the other Holy Days and Festivals. In fact, they reveal God's sequential seven-step plan for man:

1. **Passover:** Acceptance of Jesus as our atoning sacrificial Lamb that was foreshadowed by the ancient Passover sacrifice. "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (I Corinthians 5:7);
2. **Feast of Unleavened Bread:** In accepting the sacrifice of the unleavened "bread from heaven," that is, Jesus (John 6:41), and understanding that, biblically, leaven represents sin (I Corinthians 5:7), Paul thus urges us to "*keep the feast* (of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. **Pentecost,** anciently the *Feast of Firstfruits:* Those who have God's Spirit are called firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:23, James 1:18, Revelation 14:4), and Jesus was the First of the firstfruits. Pentecost is also the birthday of Christianity and God's Church, which is the collection of God's saints or firstfruits.
4. **Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets:** The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the

Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus and the first resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the *trumpet of God*, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (I Thessalonians 4:16).

5. **Day of Atonement:** What happens after Jesus returns? The banishment of Satan, itself symbolized in an ancient Israelite ceremony conducted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The ceremony foreshadowed Jesus’ sacrifice in the first century and foretells Satan’s banishment during the Millennium. Only at that time will man be “at one” with God.
6. **Feast of Tabernacles:** After Satan has been banished, Jesus will establish His Kingdom. We shall be kings and priests in that Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Since this Feast follows the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.
7. **The Last Great Day** immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This Day represents the second resurrection for everyone not resurrected one thousand years earlier, and the ensuing 100-year judgment period in which everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

The *Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets* announces the resurrection of the saints and the return of Jesus, which occur simultaneously (I Thessalonians 4:16). Before those events, trumpets will announce the onset of certain plagues.

### **First the plagues, then the return of Jesus & the resurrection**

“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:18-19). Jesus commanded the apostle John to record the past, present, and future in the book of Revelation. This three-part instruction provides the book’s format.

In the initial three chapters, John describes the conditions of seven churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These chapters apply to the immediate past and to the present (that is, to conditions extant during the last decade of the first century AD, during which John wrote the book of Revelation). The future arrives in chapter 4: “After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a *trumpet* speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this’” (Revelation 4:1).

In a vision John sees heaven, and certain momentous decisions and events that occur therein. Notice how Jesus beckons him with the sound of a “trumpet.” Long ago God commanded the Israelites to use trumpets to announce significant events, such as war and the onset of Festivals (Numbers 10:9-10). In the future, God Himself will use trumpets to announce plagues, the first resurrection and the return of Jesus.

According to Jesus, the future isn’t rosy: “For then there will be *great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be*. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be

shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22). In His famous Olivet prophecy, and in response to His disciples’ inquiry, Jesus described certain events that will precede His return.

The tumultuous three and one-half years preceding Jesus’ return is alternately called the Great Tribulation and the time of Jacob’s trouble: “Now these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah. For thus says the LORD: ‘We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask now, and see, whether a man is ever in labor with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, like a woman in labor, and all faces turned pale? Alas! *For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s trouble*, but he shall be saved out of it. ‘For it shall come to pass in that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them’” (Jeremiah 30:4-9). Since the periods of time specified in book of Jeremiah and in the Olivet prophecy are both described as unparalleled, Jeremiah and Jesus were referring to the same period of time.

This period of time is characterized by martyrdom of God’s saints (Matthew 24:9) and by persecution of the modern-day nations of Israel (the United States, Great Britain, the Jewish people, etc.). It’s also characterized by the emergence of three blocs of nations, symbolically called the:

- a) King of the North, alternately known as the beast power, or fourth kingdom (the last manifestation of the Roman Empire) of Daniel 2;
- b) King of the South, probably an Islamic nation or group of nations; and
- c) Kings of the East, probably Asian nations.

These nations will gather at Megiddo, in Northern Israel. Megiddo is the location of the battle of Armageddon: “Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed. Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (Revelation 16:13-16). (For a description of end-time events, including Armageddon, please read our article entitled *Biblical Prophecy Explained*.)

These nations, and an ecclesiastical organization led by the false prophet (Revelation 16:13), will persecute both God’s saints and the modern-day nations of Israel during the years, months, and days preceding the return of Jesus. He’ll return to avenge and save His people (the saints and the modern-day nations of Israel, including the Jewish people) from complete destruction: “Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. *Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations*, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward

the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one” (Zechariah 14:1-9). (Indeed, according to His Olivet Prophecy, Jesus will also return to save man from total annihilation.)

Before Jesus returns, and immediately following the great tribulation, God will afflict mankind with “plagues.” (For a thorough understanding of these plagues, you must read Revelation in its entirety, and specifically, chapters eight through ten, and sixteen.) “When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven *trumpets*. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven *trumpets* prepared themselves to sound” (Revelation 8:1-6). A trumpet announces the delivery of each plague from a God angry at the nations and organizations persecuting His people, the saints and the modern-day nations of Israel. They are thus called the *trumpet plagues*.

Following the trumpet plagues, and the seven last plagues specified in Revelation 16, Jesus will return and wage war (Revelation 19:11, Zechariah 14:19). “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. 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” (I Thessalonians 4:16-17). And, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Corinthians 15:50-53).

God will use a deafening trumpet to announce the simultaneous return of Jesus and the first resurrection. (For information on the resurrections, please read our article entitled *Destination Heaven or Destination Earth?* Also, request our free audio cassette entitled, "The Three Resurrections")

## **The relevance of God's Holy Days and Festivals**

God's Holy Days and Festivals reveal a phase of His plan for mankind. God has been around forever. What did He do before Adam and Eve, and what will happen after He transfers His throne to a transformed earth? In other words, what did God do before the first chapter of Genesis, and what will happen after the last chapter of Revelation? No one knows.

The Bible isn't a biography; for example, Abraham's 175 years are condensed into a few chapters. And we know next to nothing about Jesus' first thirty years. Moreover, the Bible doesn't provide an exhaustive account of the history of Israel or of the Church; in several places, years and decades fly by in just a few verses.

Furthermore, the Bible doesn't provide us with a complete description of God's plan. His plan did not begin in the Garden of Eden, nor does it end in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation. However, the Bible does describe a certain phase of that plan. This phase began with Jesus' sacrifice in 31 AD, and ends in the transfer of God's throne to a transformed earth, described in Revelation 22. And this phase of God's plan is revealed in His Holy Days and Festivals.

This article described the ancient and prophetic significance of the *Festival of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets*. The Feast anticipates the return of Jesus and the resurrection. By celebrating this Feast (on the first day of the seventh month of the Hebraic calendar, which corresponds to our September or early October), we look forward to hearing the trumpet that will announce His return.

By celebrating God's Festivals and Holy Days, we commemorate the death and sacrifice of Jesus our Passover; the gift of the transformative Spirit of God, first made available on Pentecost; and the birthday of the Church and Christianity. We also anticipate the return of Jesus and the first resurrection; the banishment of Satan; the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth; the second resurrection and ensuing Great White Throne Judgment period; and the transfer of God's Throne to a transformed earth. These are the events observed in God's Holy Days and Feasts. I opened this article with a question: "What can an ancient festival possibly mean to a Christian living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?" These ancient Festivals and Holy Days reveal God's plan. And God's plan is relevant!

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