

What Is The Feast Of Trumpets, Anyway?

by Staff

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*"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."
—Leviticus 23:24*

Each year in the autumn, the people of God's church celebrate the Feast of Trumpets. Before the arrival of this one-day Feast, those who work or attend school must arrange to have the day off. What do we say to our bosses or our teachers on such occasions? And what about our "non-church" friends? What if they ask us why we need a day off so soon after the summer holidays?

In asking these questions, I certainly am not recommending that we tell these people all the fine details. In fact, in Matthew 7:6, Jesus Christ Himself advised against doing so. Still, we might have one or two close friends who are not in God's church—good friends who are open-minded and would not ridicule our beliefs—whom we do not mind explaining the details to.

In the past, when I was asked about these things by workmates, I just used to tell them that I have a "special church day" coming up, and that was usually sufficient. They rarely pursued it beyond that.

But what about us as individuals? Do we know why we take the day off each Feast of Trumpets? Why do we attend special church services? Are we merely perpetuating an old, Jewish ritual? Or is there really something special about the day?

Just what *is* the Feast of Trumpets, anyway?

Perhaps we once again need to clarify the details of why and how we in God's church keep the Feast of Trumpets, particularly for our young people, as well as those who are new to the church. We will use the journalistic format of answering, What? Why? Who? When? Where? and How?

What Is the Feast of Trumpets?

Simply stated, the Feast of Trumpets is one of God's feast days. It is the fourth of the seven annual holy days, and it is the first of the *fall* holy days.

A glance at most calendars will show that it is, in fact, a day that is still observed by the Jews. They call it *Rosh Hashanah* which means "Head of the Year" or "First of the Year." This is because it falls on the first day of the seventh month of God's sacred calendar. We will return to this point later.

But the Feast of Trumpets is a very special feast day. In many ways, it is a pivotal day.

In our hymnal's version of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," we sing, "In the beauty of the autumn Christ was born across the sea." This is because there is some evidence that the human Jesus may have been born on or very near the Feast of Trumpets. Also, Bible symbolism and prophecy indicate that He may well return to this earth on the Feast of Trumpets in some future year.

This feast symbolizes a vast turning point in world history. It pictures the pivotal changeover between the age of man, of darkness, and of Satan to the age of God, the World Tomorrow, the Millennium, and the Kingdom of God.

But what do trumpets have to do with all this? What is their significance?

The answer to this question is that many scriptures tell us that trumpet blasts will accompany the major, tumultuous events of the end times, the return of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the dead. Here are just a few of those scriptures:

» And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24:31)

» . . . 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. (I Corinthians 15:52; see I Thessalonians 4:16))

» So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded. . . . Then the second angel sounded. . . . Then the third angel sounded. . . . Then the fourth angel sounded. . . . Then the fifth angel sounded. . . . Then the sixth angel sounded. . . . 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!" (Revelation 8:6-8, 10, 12; 9:1, 13; 11:15)

Why Do We Keep the Feast of Trumpets?

The simple answer to our second question is that we keep the Feast of Trumpets because God clearly commands us to:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ". . . . These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. . . . 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 23:1, 4, 24-25)

But God does not command us to do things just to show off His power. His commands are always filled with true logic and common sense; when He commands us to do something, it is always for a very good reason. He tells us to keep His Feast of Trumpets because He wants us to take a break from the mundane tasks of our daily lives. Like God's other holy days, the Feast of Trumpets is like a 24-hour stop sign. God wants us to stop!

When she was two, our granddaughter, Madison, had a unique way of saying, "Stop": She could pronounce just the last consonant of the word. However, there was no mistaking what she meant when she wanted you to quit doing something—teasing or tickling her, for example. She sternly held up her little hand and shouted, "Puh!"

On the Feast of Trumpets, God wants us to stop, to put aside our relatively unimportant daily affairs, and to concentrate for a mere 24 hours on what is really important, not on the physical things that are not lasting or eternal (II Corinthians 4:18). Even the rocks and mountains of this earth eventually will wear away to sand and dust (Psalm 102:25-27; see Hebrews 1:10-12). On this feast, God wants us to stop in order to concentrate on the truly eternal things: the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the end of the age of man, and the Kingdom of God.

That is why we keep the Feast of Trumpets!

Who Should Keep the Feast of Trumpets?

But is God's command to keep the Feast of Trumpets not just an Old Testament command? Was it not just commanded for the children of Israel? Is it not just a Jewish feast day—or at best an Israelite feast day?

No! First, we must remember that we in the United States, Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth, and Western Europe *are* the children of Israel! We are the modern descendants of the children of Israel that we read about in the Bible.

More importantly, we are the New Testament "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). The physical Israelites were God's Old Testament "church." Conversely, today's church of God is the New Testament congregation of Israel. As Paul writes, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29; see Romans 9:6-8).

In addition, God made His Sabbaths and holy days for *all* mankind, not just for the Israelites. These are the Feasts *of God*, not the Feasts of the Jews or the Israelites! In Old Testament times, God chose the Israelites to be the examples of how to fulfill His way of life to the rest of mankind (Deuteronomy 4:5-8), even though, for the most part, they did not do a great job of it. In the New Testament era, the church of God is responsible to be the example to the world of how to keep God's way of life (Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:14-15).

It is sometimes hard for us to believe, but our tiny congregations are real, bona-fide parts of God's *one* true church! We are not just one of the myriad denominations of churches of the world. Our bosses, friends, and teachers might think that that is all we are. Sadly, they do not know any better.

Jesus tells us quite clearly that His one true church would be a "little flock" (Luke 12:32), so we should not worry that we are not one of those huge churches that boast gigantic congregations. We are a tiny fragment of God's little flock! *God's* church! If we are God's, then that is all that matters. It is certainly not cause for shame or embarrassment, but for true joy and even for the proper kind of pride!

When Should We Keep the Feast of Trumpets?

Leviticus 23:24 tells us clearly, "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." The appointed time for the Feast of Trumpets is on the first day of the seventh month of God's sacred year. Like other months,

this seventh month has two names: *Tishri* meaning "beginning," and *Ethanim* meaning "strong" or "valiant," which may refer to the return and intervention of the supremely strong and valiant Captain of our salvation, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:10, KJV).

The Feast of Trumpets is actually a New Year's Day! It falls on the first day of a new year, hence the name *Tishri* or "beginning." There are two different (but complementary) "New Year's Days" in God's calendar because there are two distinct years in God's calendar or, more accurately, two distinct starting points for counting the year. One is the sacred and religious year, which starts in the spring with the month *Abib* or *Nisan*. The other is the administrative and financial year, also called the Civil Year, and it starts in the autumn on the Feast of Trumpets. In Bible times the year's main harvests were complete by this date and enough crops had been sold by this time to enable farmers to afford to attend the fall holy day celebrations.

Where Should We Keep the Feast of Trumpets?

Must the Feast of Trumpets, like the Feast of Tabernacles, be kept in Jerusalem? Does it have to be kept in the place "where God places His name" (Deuteronomy 14:23-24)?

Initially, the Israelites observed God's Feasts in the wilderness where the Tabernacle was set up, and later, these celebrations were centered on the Temple in Jerusalem. It is likely that in those later days many people from outlying areas came into Jerusalem and stayed for more than three weeks arriving before the Feast of Trumpets on Tishri 1, and staying until after the Last Great Day on Tishri 22. Historical records tell us that in Jesus' day Jerusalem swelled by hundreds of thousands of people during the festival seasons.

However, unlike the Feast of Tabernacles, there is no command that the Feast of Trumpets must be kept in a specific location—what we call a "Feast site." We are free to keep the Feast of Trumpets in our home church locations.

How Should We Keep the Feast of Trumpets?

Once again, our instruction in this area comes from Leviticus 23:24-25:

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.

There are a few specific instructions here on how God wants us to observe His Feast of Trumpets:

1. It should be kept as a day of rest, similar to a weekly Sabbath.
2. It is a memorial of blowing of trumpets. Most church of God congregations do not own trumpets or rams' horn *shofars*, or have accomplished trumpeters. However, we often play some appropriate, recorded trumpet music as the holy day offering is being taken up. Such music gives us a good, aural reminder of the unique significance of this day.
3. A "holy convocation" should be held. A *convocation* is an assembly of people, and a *holy convocation* is a sacred assembly of people or a church service. Although many of

God's scattered people find it necessary to keep the Sabbath alone or in tiny groups, it is good and worthwhile, if at all possible, to make the extra effort to keep the holy days with a larger group. On this feast day, we have two services—two servings of rich, spiritual food, one each in the morning and the afternoon, separated by a feast of excellent physical food.

4. No "customary work" should be done. *Customary work* (or "servile work" as phrased in the King James Version) is work that we would normally do on a regular day, usually for pay. To the delight of our young people, this is properly extended to prohibit household chores, school work, and school homework. God does, however, allow a small amount of work to be done for the final preparation of food for the Feast, although as much of this labor as possible should be done on the previous day, termed in the Bible "the day of preparation" (see Exodus 12:16; 16:23; Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 42).

5. Christians are not required to sacrifice animals by fire for their holy day offerings. Rather, they are to give monetary offerings—over and above their regular tithes—that may be used for the needs of the church and for the ongoing work of preaching God's Word.

Most of us—even our young people—have observed the Feast of Trumpets for many years. But have God's Feasts become a burden to us? Do we take them for granted? Or are we longing for them to arrive?

Let us think deeply about the details, the meanings, and the symbolism behind God's holy days. We should anticipate and prepare for them with eagerness and joy!