

WHAT'S THE VALUE OF GOD'S HOLYDAYS TO US AND THE REST OF THE WORLD?

Leviticus 23:24

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, and holy convocation.

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As we look around at deteriorating world conditions, many wonder, "What on earth is God doing?" From a human perspective, the future has never been more erratic, uncertain, and dangerous! Somewhere in the world, a new "crisis" seems to appear weekly, if not daily. What are God's people to do? What is the next major event for God's people—



in fact, for the whole world? God has the answers! And He has "hidden" them in plain sight, right where most of mankind refuses to look—in your own Bible—away from the "wise" and "mighty" of this world (1 Corinthians 1:26–29; Romans 1:21:26). The unfortunate fact is, most people are biblically illiterate, and most who do study their Bibles are blinded because they believe the "keys" to understanding God's plan are "done away." We are talking about God's Holy Days.

In Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, pivotal prophecy chapters, Christ details the general overall scenario for the world: religious deception, wars, famines, disease epidemics, earthquakes, and so forth. These have been going on in ever-increasing intensity from the beginning. Christ said, however, "All these are the beginning of sorrows," or "birth pangs," of the world (Matthew 24:8). Things were going to get worse! Much worse! World conditions are building up to a grand smash earth-shattering crescendo. Christ warned at the end of the age, "...there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). "And except that the Lord had shortened those days," Christ prophesied, "no flesh should be saved [alive]: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days" (Mark 13:20, emphasis mine throughout).

God's Holy Days, or Festivals, as laid out in Leviticus 23, picture God's plan of redemption—what God is doing on the earth—from the Sabbath and Passover on

through to the Last Great Day. The spring Festivals, Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost, relate mostly to God's church, the first-fruits (James 1:18), and have been fulfilled in history. The rest, the fall Festivals, consisting of the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day, deal with the rest of the world and lie immediately ahead of us. And what awesome things they portend!

Many pray, "Thy kingdom come," or have said, "I can't wait for the Day of the Lord to come" without realizing what the answer to this prayer will entail! Amos 5:18 declares, "Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light." It is often said, correctly, "Be careful what you wish for." Zephaniah 1:14–16 goes even further: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers."

The Feast of Trumpets—What it Means—What Will Happen

Trumpets have been almost universally a signal of war. The Feast of Trumpets that we celebrate reminds us in advance of both the coming "trumpet plagues" (Revelation 8–11) that will be poured out in the terrifying "Day of the Lord," and of our present job of lifting up our voice "like a trumpet" (Isaiah 58:1) to warn the nations of the soon-coming Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21). The Feast of Trumpets will indeed be a day of fear and trepidation for mankind, but a day of rejoicing for the saints!

This is the time when Jesus Christ shall come again in clouds, riding upon a great white horse, descending with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God (1 Thessalonians 4:14–17). This will be at the last trumpet, "... for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52)!

What a day this will be! The saints of God will be resurrected to immortal life—metabolically changed into spirit beings, born into the very Family of God—the time of our "spiritual birthday." At this time, those who will have received everlasting life will be given authority to rule and serve on earth under Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:6; 2:6; 5:10; 20:6) for a thousand years.

The second coming of Christ is revealed in the book of Revelation as occurring in three sets of seven: the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven last plagues of God. In Revelation 5, we see a seven-sealed scroll or book that only Christ was deemed worthy to open. The seven seals cover the rest of the book. One by one, Christ strips open the seals, as we see in chapter six, verses 1 through 17. Note that these seven seals are an expanded visionary description of the same series of events Christ described earlier in Matthew 24. The Bible interprets its own symbols, and Christ

here reveals what these seals mean in His own words! The seventh seal consists of seven trumpets, and in turn, the seventh or last trumpet consists of the seven last plagues, which culminate in Christ's second coming.

In Revelation 8:1–2, the time of the opening of the “seventh seal” marks the beginning of the Day of the Lord, the prophesied time of God’s wrath. Notice John’s description of this momentous event: “And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”

Christ will begin to directly intervene in world affairs at the seventh or last trumpet (Revelation 11:15–19). A trumpet is symbolic of war. The seven trumpets symbolize a series of plagues that are to fall upon the hostile powers that oppose God and oppress God’s people. The first four plagues are poured out on the land, the sea, the rivers, and the atmosphere—the basic components of man’s life-support system!

Christ Our Warrior-King

When Christ came the first time, He came as the meek and lowly Lamb of God whose mission was to die for the sins of the world. When He comes the second time, He is coming as a Mighty Conqueror—as King of kings, and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). But before worldwide reconstruction can commence, Christ must deal with His enemies by waging war with the nations opposing Him. He will “destroy them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

In Revelation 19:13,16, we see Christ returning as a mighty conquering Warrior-King: “And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God... And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.” He will then execute the supernatural seven last plagues, which will ultimately bring rebellious mankind to its knees. We see here another Bible opposite. As shocking as it may seem to those who picture the Lord Jesus Christ as only a sweet, harmless, loving Lord Jesus who would never hurt anyone, the first thing He is going to do at His return is destroy millions of people! Revelation 6:17 declares, “... the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

John writes: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:11–15). “And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their

eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth” (Zechariah 14:12). Christ will subdue all who resist Him. (See Psalm 110:6; Zechariah 14:3; 12:9; Isaiah 34:1–3; 66:15–16; Revelation 16, and 19:17–21 in your own Bible.)

The Day of Atonement

The next Holy Day, the Day of Atonement, falling between the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, is the one day of the year God’s people are commanded to fast or humble themselves. Most professing Christians know little or nothing of the Day of Atonement, and the vast majority of those who do know of this day usually label it “Jewish,” “done away,” and not for Christians today. They couldn’t be more mistaken! Just what does the Day of Atonement picture? How does it fit into God’s plan? How does this day “connect” the Feast of Trumpets to the Feast of Tabernacles?

Christ will make all things right. *Satan, the original sinner* and our ultimate enemy, will be dealt with. We read, “... the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9). The Day of Atonement foretells how this enemy of God and mankind will be dealt with, and ultimately, the whole world will be made at “at-one-ment” with God.

“Atonement” [Hebrew kippur, from kaphar, which means “covering” or “expiation”] as used in Leviticus 23:28, means to make amends for sins and shortcomings. In its broadest sense, it means “to make right.” The Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, was anciently the most important of all the ordinances given to Israel, because on that day, atonement was made for all the sins of the entire congregation. This day also portends tremendous prophetic significance to God’s people.

Notice how the observance is depicted in Leviticus 16:7–10: “And he [the priest] shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.” Note the difference! “And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.” (Emphasis mine.)

Note the fate, the end, of the two goats. First, there were two goats, and only one (not two) was representative of Christ, the one that, *like Christ, was sacrificed*. The other—the one not for the Lord—represented the Azazel, or scapegoat—and was *not sacrificed*, but after confessing all the sins of Israel upon his head, was sent away “by the hand of a fit man” into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21).

Now, is there any description in the New Testament of an event that occurs after the return of Christ, coinciding with the above? Yes, there is! Letting the Bible interpret its own symbolism, turn to Revelation 20:1-3: “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

Notice the similarities. Just as a “fit man” takes the scapegoat to the wilderness to let him go “unto a land not inhabited,” an angel (and angels are very “fit”) lays hold on Satan and casts him into the bottom-less pit. This could mean nothing else (Cf. Revelation 20:1-2).

Many are confused, even within the culture of God’s church, what the second goat, the Azazel goat, represents. Some believe both goats represent different aspects of Christ’s one sacrifice. This theory dates back hundreds of years to the Catholic Church. Others believe the scapegoat represents none other than Satan, the Devil. Satan the Devil, is ultimately the one responsible for all man’s sins. He was the tempter in the Garden of Eden, the tempter of Christ Himself, and has influenced mankind ever since. The world cannot distinguish the difference between the true Christ and the false Christ—between the true God and the false god. They appear so much alike that man cannot differentiate between them. “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers [yes, Satan has ministers!] also be transformed as the ministers of righteous-ness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

The day ultimately points to that time when the saints—God’s people from all ages—will become fully and finally at one with God.

The Millennium Begins

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). Once Christ, the Conquering King, destroys His enemies with the “bright-ness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8) —once Satan the Devil is put away for a thousand years (Revelation 20:2-3), He will establish world headquarters at Jerusalem, and proceed to gather the peoples of Israel and Judah into Palestine to repopulate the land (Hosea 1:10; Ezekiel 37:21,22)—thus, Israel, both Houses, will be restored as a nation; the people “shall dwell safely all of them” (Ezekiel 38:8); and “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls” (Zechariah 2:2-5). “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Micah 4:2).

The Feast of Tabernacles will be reinstated and enforced worldwide. Those nations that refuse to keep it will suffer the plague of no rain (Zechariah 14:16-19). At long last, all Israel will be reconciled with God and will become the model nation she was intended to be.

Christ will, at that time, restore true worship, peace, and harmony in the land. The long-awaited Millennium—the prophesied thousand years of utopian peace, harmony, and global reconstruction—will then begin. “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

“And He [Christ] shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years” (Malachi 3:3-4).

Yes, the time is soon coming when God is going to set His hand to heal our world. In spite of the enormous problems we face today, a happy, prosperous future awaits the inhabitants of planet Earth.

In the meantime, we have the responsibility of doing the Work, of submitting to God’s rule now, of looking to and relying on Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior, of obeying the ten commandments of God, and keeping His annual Feasts—His Holy Days.

The Eighth Day

The eighth, or Last Great Day, immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:36,39), and what a great day it will be! This is the time of the second, or general, resurrection. The scripture reads, “But the rest of the dead”—those not in the first resurrection that occurs at Christ’s Second Coming—“lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5). This day pictures the time of the great “fall harvest,” when all the billions upon billions of people who have lived and died and never had the opportunity to hear and accept the only name under heaven by which men might be saved (Acts 4:12) will be *resurrect-ed to physical life* and have their *first opportunity* to come to full repentance and receive salvation! Families and loved ones will be reunited. Parents, children, grandparents, and extended families will live again! The earth will be green and lush, having undergone a thousand years of restoration under the government of God. The people will be hungry for knowledge, wondering what has happened since their long dreamless sleep in death, and we who are now called and chosen will be there to guide and teach them. We will have been kings and priests in the Kingdom of God for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10). How much worry and grief about who may or may not be in heaven or hell would be laid to rest if only people understood God’s Holy Days! But now you know.

What About You?

What about you? Are you called and chosen? Are you growing in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)? Are you longing to keep His Holy Days just as Jesus and His disciples did? If so, we have great news for you! The Church of God International will be observing Holy Day services in various locations across the United States and around the world—and you are invited to attend! Just bring your smile, your Bible, and be prepared to learn, grow, and enjoy God's Feasts!