

## *Running To and Fro*

The Feast of Trumpets is a day that pictures the return of Jesus Christ to this tired old earth.

In God's holy written Word, the time leading up to the return of Jesus Christ is called "the last days," "the end times," or "the time of the end."

Are we living in that time of the end? There seems to be a strong probability that we are. World conditions certainly seem to be heading that way.

The time of the end is a period that God's Word has a lot to say about. Here is just one of those verses – a very well-known one:

**At that time Michael shall stand up, the great (*angelic*) prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end... (*the time preceding that symbolized by the Feast of Trumpets*)... **many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. (Daniel 12:1-4)****

What will it be like in the last days? What will many people be doing? God tells us here through His prophet Daniel that "many shall run to and fro."

Just what is this running to and fro as mentioned by God through Daniel? And is it a good thing or a bad thing? Although Daniel does not specifically say so, the implication seems to be that it is a bad thing.

When I think of this phrase, “running to and fro,” my mind goes back to an old Chuck Berry song entitled “Too Much Monkey Business” (which was also recorded by the Beatles, Elvis Presley and many others) in which the singer tells the story of a young person whose life is out of control. Here are a few lines from that song:

**Running to-and-fro, hard working at the mill. Never fails in the mail,  
there comes a rotten bill.**

*Now here comes the chorus. You can join in if you like!*

**Too much monkey business. Too much monkey business.**

**Too much monkey business, for me to be involved in!**

**Salesman talking to me, trying to run me up a creek**

**Says, "You can buy it; go on try it; you can pay me next week."**

**Same thing every day, getting up, going to school.**

**No need my complaining, my objections overruled.**

**Blonde hair, good looking, trying to get me hooked.**

**Wants me to marry, get a home, settle down, write a book.**

**Working in the filling station, too many tasks.**

**Wipe the windows, check the tires, check the oil, dollar gas.**

What is the singer complaining about? School obligations; two jobs to make ends meet; sales-people trying to talk him into something he doesn't want to do; a girlfriend who is trying to talk him into things he doesn't want to do! A life out of control? Yes. A life of running to and fro!

The purpose of this article is to encourage you – and myself too! – as we all draw ever closer and closer to the return of Jesus Christ and the coming of God's Kingdom – to stop aimlessly and frantically running to and fro after fruitless pursuits. Also to encourage you to settle down and to get your end-time priorities straight.

## ***Why this message at this time?***

Why am I writing this article at this particular time? Here's why – from the recent personal experience of myself and my family:

Since being called into God's church, I have often said that I would never build a new house of my own. Why not? Not because there is anything inherently wrong with it. It is not for me to judge others in such endeavours. But rather because I have seen many fellow church members do so, and I have seen them getting so wrapped up in their house-building projects that it seemed to have totally consumed them – at least for the duration of the construction. The spiritual life of some was affected negatively – in some cases bordering on Sabbath-breaking.

A few years ago, my wife, Tricia, and I sold our big, old family home in Victoria, British Columbia, and purchased a “new” one – a much smaller one – in a town called Qualicum Beach, a hundred miles north of Victoria. It is actually not a new house. It was built in 1973. The previous owners were quite elderly and, although they kept the property in excellent condition, it was naturally somewhat old-fashioned – at least to our tastes.

So Trish and I decided to make some changes – some of them quite big changes – old windows and doors out, new ones in, old carpet and linoleum out, new flooring in, new paint, new trim, new siding, new deck, etc. The work turned out to be much more than we expected, and it has taken up so much more of our time.

No. We have not neglected our daily prayer or Bible study. But there are so many more things that are much more important for us to be doing at this time in our lives than to be *running to and from* hardware stores and playing apprentice to the carpenters we employed to do the lion's share of the renovation work.

So you see, we too found ourselves *running to and fro* and spending our time doing things which were less important than the things that we know we should be doing!

Do *you* ever get that way? Are you that way now? Do you find yourself running to and fro, perhaps like the proverbial headless chicken?

## ***Running to and fro***

Running to and fro! Surprisingly, this term is mentioned as many as twenty-three times in the King James Version of the Bible!

There are different aspects of this phrase in the Bible: some positive, some negative, some of God, some of Satan, some of men. But many of them seem to have a link to the common theme of the Feast of Trumpets and the last days.

Let us look at a few of the mentions – the ones that are more specifically relevant to the symbolism of the Feast of Trumpets:

**For the eyes of the LORD *run to and fro* throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. (II Chronicles 16:9)**

Here we see a positive example of running to and fro – from God Himself. Here we read of the LORD’s eyes – YHVH’s eyes – the eyes of the One who became Jesus Christ – running to and fro throughout the world – for the ultimate purpose of showing His strength – His strength which He will ultimately exert for the benefit of those whose hearts are relatively perfect. The prophet Zechariah also mentions this same running to and fro of YHVH’s eyes:

**For who has despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet (*plumb line*) in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven (*the seven prophetic, symbolic lamps and pipes mentioned in verse 2*); they are the eyes of the LORD, which *run to and fro* through the whole earth.**

This running to and fro of God’s eyes is a good and positive thing, of course. But is *all* running to and fro good and positive? No. Not at all! The very next mention of running to and fro comes from the great perverter and counterfeiter of all things good:

**And the LORD said unto Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, “From *going to and fro* in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” (Job 1:7 and 2:2)**

Why does Satan go to and fro in the earth? Why does he walk up and down in it? For the ultimate good of mankind? Of course not! But is he just aimlessly wandering around, wasting his time? Not at all! He is counterfeiting the Lord's eyes – but for the very opposite of God's righteous purpose. Satan is going to and fro in the earth for the purpose of exerting his strength for the alleged "benefit" of those who are deceived – those whose hearts are not perfect before God; also to seek evidence for his accusations against the Lord's brothers and sisters (Revelation 12:10) – those whose converted hearts are relatively perfect, and to try to divert them – to try to get them off God's track, and away from God's way of life.

Here is another negative "to and fro" verse from Job:

**When I lie down, I say, "When shall I arise, and the night be gone? And I am full of *tossings to and fro* unto the dawning of the day. (Job 7:4)**

Have you ever had a night like these ones that Job is describing here? I certainly have! Probably, many of you have too. You're lying there, praying that God will help you to fall into a deep, refreshing sleep. But you are kept awake by some worry, doubt or question. You're tossing to and fro – from your left side – onto your back – then onto your right side – then back again! If you are anything like me, while you are lying awake, you will be disturbed by thoughts that this time lying awake and pining for sleep is time wasted – that if only you could fall asleep now, you would be so much better refreshed on the morrow when your waking time would be so much better used. Then what happens? You fall into a delicious sleep – about half an hour before your wretched alarm clock goes off!

Another "to and fro" verse – still in the book of Job:

**Will you break a leaf driven *to and fro*? And will you pursue the dry stubble? (Job 13:25)**

Here, being driven to and fro is once again put forward as a negative thing. Job is talking to the LORD here – again the YHVH – the One who later became Jesus Christ – and he (Job) likens himself to a leaf that is driven to and fro – probably by the wind, and he asks the LORD if He would or could or should “break” (NKJV – “frighten”) such a leaf. In his agony, poor Job is saying, “Lord, you are already driving me to and fro; so how could you be so cruel as to add fuel to the fire that you have kindled against me? Do you ever feel this way? In hindsight, we know why God was doing this for the ultimate good of His beloved servant, Job. Likewise, in our sufferings, we can be encouraged by Job’s experience.

**They reel *to and fro*, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits’ end. (Psalms 107:27)**

Who are the “they” that this psalmist is referring to? To find out, we must go back to verse 23:

**They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;**

When a severe storm comes up, even the most experienced sailors reel to and fro, stagger like drunkards, and may even be almost paralyzed by fear. Does this mean that God has something against all “they that go down to the sea in ships”? And how does this refer to the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets symbolism? Actually, it is amazing how many scriptures refer to this time.

**Therefore rejoice, you heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth *and of the sea!* For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short time. (Revelation 12:12)**

When Satan and his demons are cast out of heaven and down to earth, great woe will come upon the inhabitants of the earth – and those of the sea. Later when the second vial (bowl) plague is poured out, here is what happens:

**And the second angel poured out his vial *upon the sea*; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died *in the sea*. (Revelation 16:3)**

These two verses from the book of Revelation probably mainly refer to the fish, whales, and other sea creatures. But they also may include the human beings who dwell on and in the sea in ships and boats. Here is a description of the time when the Beast and Babylon the Great are put down and burned by God, and the effect of that huge change on shipmasters and sailors – the secondary servants of the evil, rapacious merchants of the earth:

**After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies... Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her... And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buys their merchandise any more:... And the fruits that your soul lusted after are departed from you, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from you, and you shall find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.’ And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like unto this great city!’ And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich *all that had ships in the sea* by reason of her costliness!’ For in one hour is she made desolate. (Revelation 18: 1-3, 8, 11, 14-19)**

So we see that God *does* have something against many of the shipmasters and sailors – at least the ones who carry out the orders of the wicked merchants, and who bring the toys and treasures from afar in order to tempt God’s people. Here is another interesting “to and fro” verse – one that appears to be linked to the Revelation mentions of these evil merchants, sailors and shipmasters:

**The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death. (Proverbs 21:6)**

Wealth is not evil in itself. God’s Word has many mentions of people who were at the same time wealthy and godly. However, the pursuit of wealth in an untruthful or otherwise dishonest way certainly is evil. So is the giving of a higher priority to physical treasures rather than to God’s treasure. Many scriptures tell us so. Putting them together, God tells us through Solomon that these twin sins make up a vanity that is tossed to and fro between those who seek death. Seek death? Does anyone really seek death? Is God referring to suicidal people here? Or is He rather referring to people who know what their priorities should be – i.e. God’s way of life; but who vainly and illogically shove those right priorities aside in order to pursue Satan’s way of death and the things that riches can buy? This theme of corrupt commerce continues in our next “to and fro” scripture, which also deals with the conditions of the time of the end:

**From the ends of the earth we have heard songs: “Glory to the righteous!” But I said, “I am ruined, ruined! Woe to me! The treacherous dealers (*i.e. the merchants*) have dealt treacherously, indeed, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.” Fear and the pit and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth.... (*excessive desire for toys is a snare*) ... The earth is violently broken, the earth is split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, and it will fall, and not rise again. (Isaiah 24:16-17, 19-20)**



Here we see pictured the whole end-time earth tottering like a drunken man. And we see these conditions linked to the sins of the unscrupulous merchants – the treacherous dealers – and to the choices being made by the average inhabitant of the earth. On and on it goes – into the next “to and fro” verse:

**Woe to you who plunder, though you have not been plundered; and you who deal treacherously, though they have not dealt treacherously with you! When you cease plundering, you will be plundered; when you make an end of dealing treacherously, they will deal treacherously with you....** *(Here are those treacherous dealers again – those dishonest merchants)...* **O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for you. Be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble...** *(Please note the time setting – the time of trouble)...* **At the noise of the tumult the people shall flee; when You lift Yourself up, the nations shall be scattered; and Your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar: as the *running to and fro* of locusts shall He run upon them. (Isaiah 33: 1-4)**

God will run upon these treacherous merchants in a similar way that locusts descend on crops – suddenly and inescapably – running to and fro on them, devouring them completely. It will be too late to do anything about it then – once the time of trouble is in full swing. Is it not far better to do what we can about it now? And to start getting our priorities right – now?

**Then shall you say in your heart, “Who has begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing (*NKJV: wandering*) *to and fro*? And who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? (Isaiah 49:21)**

This verse describes a person – probably a woman – a distraught mother who is ensnared in the end-time captivity of Israel. We can imagine her wandering back and forth behind the razor-wired walls and fences of her prison like a mad-woman, lamenting the loss of her children.

***Run you to and fro* through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth; and I will pardon it. (Jeremiah 5:1)**

Here God commands Jeremiah – or any other person, for that matter – to run to and fro through the end-time streets of the so-called Holy City and its suburbs. For what purpose? To see if he can find anyone who still executes righteous judgment and who still seeks the truth of God. Such righteousness will be so very scarce at that awful time.

The prophet Amos agrees. The Word of God will be in short supply in that day:

**And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall *run to and fro* to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. (Amos 8:12)**

Jesus Christ agrees! Godly faith will be in short supply in that day. He asked:

**When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)**

Our next group of verses is part of Ezekiel’s lamentation for Tyre. Look how God frowns upon the merchants we have already mentioned:

**And say unto Tyrus, O you that are situate at the entry of the sea, which are a merchant of the people for many isles, “Thus says the Lord GOD; O Tyrus, you have said, ‘I am of perfect beauty’”... The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in you your calkers (*ship-repairers & carpenters*): all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in you to occupy your merchandise... Tarshish was your merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in your fairs. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were your merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in your market... The men of Dedan were your merchants; many isles were the merchandise of your hand: they brought you for a present horns of ivory and ebony. Syria was your merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of your making: they occupied in your fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. Judah, and the land of Israel, they were your merchants: they traded in your market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm. Damascus was your merchant in the multitude of the wares of your making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. Dan also and Javan *going to and fro* occupied in your fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in your market. Dedan was your merchant in precious clothes for chariots.**

**Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with you in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they your merchants. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were your merchants: they occupied in your fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, were your merchants. These were your merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among your merchandise... Your riches, and your fairs, your merchandise, your mariners, and your pilots, your calkers (*ship-repairers & carpenters*), and the occupiers of your merchandise, and all your men of war... (*The military – protecting your hedonistic lifestyle*)... that are in you, and in all your company which is in the midst of you, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of your ruin... When your wares went forth out of the seas, you filled many people; you did enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of your riches and of your merchandise. In the time when you shall be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters your merchandise and all your company in the midst of you shall fall... The merchants among the people shall hiss at you; you shall be a terror, and never shall be any more. (Ezekiel 27:3, 9, 12-13, 15-24, 27, 33-34, 36)**

But who is behind all this merchandising? We are told in the familiar verses of the very next chapter:

**Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, “Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD; You seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You had been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of your tabrets and of your pipes was prepared in you in the day that you were created. You are the anointed cherub that covers; and I have set you so: you were upon the holy mountain of God; you have walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you.... (Ezekiel 28:11-15)**

We know who these verses refer to! We know who this was! This was Heylel (erroneously translated “Lucifer” in Isaiah 14:12) – the one whose name was changed to Satan the Devil – the Adversary – the one who withstands both God and His people. Continuing in Ezekiel 28:

**By the multitude of your merchandise they have filled the midst of you with violence, and you have sinned: therefore I will cast you as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you have corrupted your wisdom by reason of your brightness: I will cast you to the ground; I will lay you before kings, that they may behold you. You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your traffick... (*your running-to-and fro, your merchandise, your trade*)... therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of you, it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold you. All they that know you among the people shall be astonished at you: you shall be a terror, and never shall you be any more. (Verses 16-19)**

None other than Heylel – Satan – is behind this kind of merchandising and this kind of running to and fro. We must fervently resist him (James 4:7) – and his human agents too:

**That we henceforth be no more children, tossed *to and fro*, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they... (*Satan’s human agents*) ... lie in wait to deceive; (Ephesians 4:14)**

Now, before closing, let us look at just one more “to and fro” scripture – which happens to be one of the classic Feast of Trumpets scriptures:

**Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run. With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of a flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array. Before them the people writhe in pain; all faces are drained of color. They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war; every one marches in formation, and they do not break ranks. They do not push one another; every one marches in his own column. Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down. They *run to and fro* in the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter at the windows like a thief. The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:1-11)**

As a follow-up, God gives us verse 15, to acknowledge before Him what is to come, we see that righteous action is required of God’s people:

**Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly.**

In conclusion then, what lessons can we learn from all these “to & fro” scriptures? Very many; but perhaps the one in the forefront is this: We are told by God to beware of excess; to beware of crafty advertising; and to beware of gathering to ourselves too much “stuff” – too many “toys” which can take our minds and our time away from what *should* be our real priorities. The bottom line is this:

Let us be putting our time and our efforts into what *should* be our real priorities – God’s priorities!

*John Plunkett*

*Building Bridges, The Church of God Canada*

*Qualicum Beach, British Columbia Canada*

*Wednesday March 16, 2011*