

The Feast of Trumpets

An overview for our young people

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 are working or attending school must make arrangements to have the day off.

What do *you* say to your boss or your teacher on such occasions? And what about your "non-church" friends? What if they ask you why you're having a day off so soon after the summer holidays?

In asking these questions, I certainly am not recommending that you tell these people all the fine details. In fact, in Matthew 7:6, Jesus Christ Himself advised against doing so. Still, you might have one or two close friends who are not in God's church – good friends who are open-minded and would not ridicule your beliefs – who you don't 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 you? In your own mind? Do you know *why* you 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?

In this article, I would like to go over and to clarify the details of why and how we, in God's church, keep the Feast of Trumpets. Let us use the format we have used elsewhere by asking the questions Why? When? Who? Where? 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.

If you look at most calendars, you will see 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 first month of God's "administrative" calendar. We will come back 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 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 the Feast of Trumpets. Also, Bible symbolism and prophecy indicate that there is a great possibility that He will return to this earth on the Feast of Trumpets in some future year.

The Feast of Trumpets symbolizes a vast turning point in world history. It pictures the pivotal change-over between the age of man, of darkness, and of Satan to the age of God, the World Tomorrow, the Millennium, and the beginning of 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 there are many scriptures which 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 I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets... And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded: and hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. Then the second angel sounded: and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. Then the third angel sounded: and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water... Then the fourth angel sounded: and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!... Then the fifth angel sounded: and I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit... Then the sixth angel sounded: and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God... 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 8:2, 6-10, 12-13; 9:1, 13; 11:15)

And He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (I Corinthians 15:52)

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (I Thessalonians 4:16)

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, "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... 'These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times... 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 23:1-2, 4, 23-25)

But God does not command us to do things just for the sake of showing off His own 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. And the reason that He commands us to keep His Feast of Trumpets is 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!

Our two-year-old granddaughter, Madison, has a unique way of saying "Stop." She can just pronounce the last consonant of the word; but there is no mistaking what she means when she wants you to quit doing something... teasing or tickling her, for example. She sternly holds her hand up, and shouts "Puh!"

Yes. On the Feast of Trumpets, God wants us to stop, to put aside our relatively unimportant daily affairs, and to concentrate for a mere twenty-four hours on what is really important. Not the physical things which are not lasting or eternal. Even the seemingly solid and everlasting rocks and mountains of this earth eventually will wear away to sand and dust.

On the Feast of Trumpets, 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, the beginning of the World Tomorrow, the Millennium, 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 of all, we must remember that we in Canada, and our brothers and sisters in the United States, 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.

But also, and more importantly, we are the New Testament "Israel of God." The physical Israelites were God's Old Testament "church." Conversely, the church of God today is the New Testament congregation of Israel.

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; not the Feasts of the Israelites! In the Old Testament times, the Israelites were the ones God chose to be the examples of how to fulfil His way of life to the rest of mankind, even though it is true that, for the most part, they did not do a great job of it. In the New Testament era, it is the church of God that holds this responsibility to shine the example to the rest of the world of how to keep God's way of life.

Yes, *God's* way of life! Even though our bosses and our teachers have little or no knowledge of it, this is God's way of life. And this way of life includes the keeping of God's holy days.

It is sometimes hard for us to believe, but our little, tiny congregations of the Church of the Great God are real, bona-fide parts of God's true church! 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 we are. But they do not know any better.

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

WHEN should we keep the Feast of Trumpets?

Repeating from Leviticus 23:4, 23-24:

“These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times... 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.’”

We are to proclaim God’s Feasts at the times they were appointed by God. The appointed time for the Feast of Trumpets is on the first day of the seventh month of God’s sacred year. Like the other months, this seventh month has two names: *Tishri* which means *Beginning*, and *Ethanim* meaning *Strong* or *Valiant*, which might well refer to the return and intervention of the supremely strong and valiant Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10).

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 years’ days" in God’s calendar because there are two years in God’s calendar or, more accurately, two different starting points for counting the year. One is the sacred and religious year which starts in the spring of the year with the month *Abib* or *Nisan*. The other is the administrative and financial year, (probably based on the agricultural cycles) and it starts in the autumn on the Feast of Trumpets. It is likely that, in "Bible times," the year’s main harvests were complete by this date and that enough crops could be sold by this time, so enabling the farmers to afford to attend and properly observe the fall holy day celebrations.

WHERE should we keep the Feast of Trumpets?

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

Initially, the Old Testament Israelites kept God’s feasts in the wilderness. Later, Feast of Trumpets celebrations were observed in the temple at Jerusalem. It is possible – even likely – that in those days the people from outlying areas came into Jerusalem and stayed for three weeks or more – the whole fall festival season – arriving before the Feast of Trumpets on Tishri 1 and staying until after the Last Great Day on Tishri 21.

However, unlike the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, there is no command that the Feast of Trumpets must be kept in a specific location – what we today call a "Feast site."

So we are free to keep the Feast of Trumpets in our home church locations.

HOW should we keep the Feast of Trumpets?

To answer this sixth and final question, let us return, once again, to God's instructions in Leviticus 23, and let us examine verses 23 to 25:

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.'"

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

It should be kept as a day of rest, similar to a weekly Sabbath Day.

It is to be a memorial of blowing of trumpets. It is probably quite safe to state that most church of God congregations do not own trumpets or ram's horn *shofars*, or have accomplished trumpeters. If we did, we would ask them to do the honours for us on the Feast of Trumpets each year. But as we do not, and in order to comply with this instruction, 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.

A "holy convocation" should be held. A convocation is an assembly of people. A holy convocation is an assembly of church people or, simply, a church service. Although many of God's scattered people find it necessary to keep the weekly Sabbaths alone or in tiny groups, it is good and very worthwhile, if at all possible, to make the extra effort to keep the Holy Days in a larger group. As the Day of Trumpets is a Feast Day, we have two services – two servings of rich, spiritual food, one in the morning and one in the afternoon – separated by a physical feast of excellent physical food.

No "customary work" should be done. Customary work (or "servile work" as it is termed 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 might properly be 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 labour as possible should be done on the previous day... termed in the Bible, the day of preparation (see Matthew 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 42).

An offering should be taken up. In our unique era of God's church, we are not required to sacrifice animals by fire for our holy day offerings. Rather, we are to give monetary offerings – over and above our regular tithes – which may be used for the running of the church and for the ongoing work of the preaching of the gospel.

Most of us – even our young people – have observed the Feast of Trumpets for many years. But have God's feast days 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 symbolism behind God's Holy Days. Let us look forward to and prepare for them with anticipation and joy!

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