



*Be not astonished at new ideas, for it is well known to you
that a thing does not therefore cease to be true because it
is not accepted by many.*

Sabbath Service
Saturday, February 3, 2007
“God’s Holy Days after the return of Christ”



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(If you are meeting in a small group, select a leader for the day. The leader reads the text printed in regular face. The rest of the group reads the text printed in bold face and wherever it states "In Unison." If you are worshipping as a single individual, read all the parts.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

The Creator of the universe bids us come to worship;
let us come in awe, reverence, and eager anticipation.
We are together to learn, to care for one another,
and to gain strength for our common ministry.
The Spirit of God is upon us, teaching and empowering.
The joy of God is our strength, today and always.

**We open ourselves to the word of life
as we lift up hands and hearts to the source of help.**

INVITATION *(In Unison)*

How shall we come before you, O God, when we have closed our ears to your law and dismissed your ways as out of date? Yet we long for clear direction and would be attentive to the word you want us to hear. Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

OPENING HYMN # 17

"We Gather Together"

*Words, Anonymous Dutch Hymn, 16th Century
Translated, Theodore Baker, 1895
Tune KREMSEER, Dutch Folk Song
Harmonized, Edward Kremser, 1877*

We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing,
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
The wicked oppressing now cease from distressing,
Sing praises to His name, He forgets not His own.

Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
Ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine;
So from the beginning the fight we were winning,
Thou, Lord, wast at our side: the glory be thine!

We all do extol thee, thou leader in battle,
And pray that thou still our defender wilt be.
Let thy congregation escape tribulation;
Thy name be ever praised: O Lord, make us free!

OPENING PRAYER *(In Unison)*

O living God, make us conscious of your healing nearness. Touch our eyes that we may see, open our ears that we may hear, and enter our hearts that we may know your love. Overshadow our souls and bodies with your presence that we may partake of your strength, your love, and your healing life. Amen.

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

PERSONAL PRAYER *(In Silence)*

HYMN # 150

“Wisdom Begins with the Fear of the Lord”

Psalm 111
Dwight Armstrong

Praise you the Lord, with your whole heart give praise,
Where all the upright assemble for God;
His glorious works shall forever endure,
Worthy of honor and praise.
There is no end unto His righteousness,
Great works of wonder He makes,
That we may know the Eternal is good,
Full of compassion and grace.

For those who fear Him our God will provide;
Ever His cov'nant He will not forget;
He showed His people the pow'r of His works,
Lands of the nations to gain.
Judgment and truth are the works of His hands
All His commandments are sure
They are all done in uprightness and truth;
They shall forever endure.

Unto His people redemption He sent,
God has commanded His cov'nant always;
Steadfast and sure it forever will stand,
Holy and rev'rend His name.
Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord;
God's praise endureth for aye;
His laws impart understanding and grace
To those who heed and obey.

PRESENTATIONS BEFORE GOD *(Not monetary offerings)*

Time for any in attendance to offer a musical or instrumental piece, a reading, comments, or anything they would like to present before God.

If no one is prepared or if you want more, the link below will open a choral anthem from a full choir for your listening enjoyment.

“Joshua Fit de Battle of Jericho”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Time for groups to make any necessary announcements relating to their own group.

COLLECT *(Preparing for the Lesson. In Unison)*

Lead us, O God, to the streams of living water that will keep us fresh and green with new growth and vitality. So nourish us amid the droughts of our lives, that we may bear good fruit. Bless all who hunger for your truth and all whose hope remains steadfast. We trust you, O God, in life and death, to provide the healing we need most and the blessing to see beyond present circumstances the joy of your presence. Amen.

THE LESSON

(Use the lesson provided here, or conduct a study of your own selection.)

God’s Holy Days after the return of Christ

*Based on an original article written by B.L. Cocherell,
Edited and updated, 2007*

New International Version (NIV) of the Bible used unless otherwise noted.

Throughout the Bible, there are many prophetic scriptures which show that the commanded observances and holy convocations will be observed after the establishment of the government of God on earth.

Many people puzzle over these scriptures, wondering if these scriptures are just analogies or if they contain prophecies that will be fulfilled in some future nation of Israel or during this age.

The Facts

There are a number of helpful facts of which one should be aware before making a study into the worship system that will be instituted after Christ returns to rule the earth.

- With the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., all laws that were practiced through the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system were suspended.
- Many scriptures show beyond a doubt that after Christ’s return, the earth will still be inhabited by physical humans who will eventually come under the rule of the government of God.

- The prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah clearly show that a temple worship system with the priesthood and animal sacrifices will exist during Christ's rule on earth. See Ezk.chp.40-46; Zech.14:16-20.

During the rule of Christ, the temple system will be officiated over by the male descendants of Zadok and the sacrifices will be performed similarly to the way they were under the agreement with ancient Israel.

The commanded observances and holy convocations, as observed by the ancient Israelites, were inseparable from the practice of sacrifices at the temple. The prophecy of Ezekiel shows that this same relationship between the commanded observances, the holy convocations, and the sacrificial system will exist during Jesus Christ's reign on the earth.

Editors note: Although the Bible gives few details regarding the temple worship system and its sacrifices and offerings after the return of Christ, it is not silent when it comes to documenting the fact that the laws, precepts, and principles that God has ordained for the purpose of worshiping him and regulating human behavior will still be in effect during Christ's rule.

Because very few details are given about the observances, holy convocations, and temple worship system after the return of Christ, it seems that this part of Ezekiel's prophecy is primarily given to show the continuity of God's plan for the salvation of humanity after the return of Jesus Christ.

This lack of detail also makes it obvious that knowing every detail of this future worship system is not important to one's salvation today. However, this knowledge will be important to those who will live under the rule of Christ.

At the appropriate time, God will reveal all of the necessary details concerning this future worship system, just as he gave exact instructions to Moses concerning the worship system to be practiced by national Israel. Therefore, the following study and analysis is not meant to be a detailed study of the subject. It is meant to be an overview, which will show the continuity and logic behind the continuance of the commanded observances and holy convocations after the return of Jesus Christ.

With the small amount of background information recorded in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and elsewhere in the scriptures about God's future temple worship system and sacred observances, one can solve some of the mysteries contained within the prophecies concerning the future commanded observances and holy convocations.

EZEKIEL'S PROPHECY

Ezekiel's prophecy is the most complete of all the accounts of the future temple system and has a list of the observances, festivals, and sacrifices that will be practiced.

Ezekiel's prophecy also shows that the weekly Sabbath and the New Moons will continue to be observed; however, there are only two annual observances mentioned. Missing from Ezekiel's list of observances are the Passover that Jesus instituted, the commanded assemblies on the first and last days of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, The Day of Atonement, and the Festival of the Eighth Day.

Some assume that Ezekiel's failure to mention specific annual observances is proof that they will not be observed in the future; however, this assumption may not be true.

A NEW PASSOVER FESTIVAL

Ezekiel chapter 45 shows that the Passover will again be observed with ritual sacrifices and offerings, but without a Passover Lamb. This new Passover is different from the original Passover in Egypt, the Passover of national Israel, and the Passover that Jesus instructed his followers to observe.

While researching this future Passover, there are two things to keep in mind:

1. Israel and the Jews (the House Israel and Judah) will have been gathered out of the nations of the world and established as a single nation again.
2. The system of offerings and sacrifices that are to be performed on this future Passover have never been required to be performed in this fashion on any prior Passover.

The Bread and Wine

One thing that is conspicuously missing from Ezekiel's prophecy is any reference to the broken bread and wine that are symbolic of Christ's body and blood. Because there is no mention of anything pertaining to the Passover that Jesus instituted, the obvious question is: Why is something this important not mentioned as being observed?

In Paul's admonition to the elect at Corinth, he was inspired to foretell that the Passover rituals of the Passover that Jesus had instituted would be discontinued after the return of Christ:

1 Corinthians 11:23-25 — **For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, (24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." (25) In the same way, after supper he**

took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

1 Corinthians 11:26 — For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Here, Paul reminds the Corinthians that he has taught them to observe the Passover and that they are to perform it with the rituals of the bread and wine as a remembrance of Christ. The necessity to do these things as a remembrance of Christ is the first clue in solving the mystery of why these rituals are not necessary after his return. The following are reasons why the symbolism of the bread and the wine may no longer be necessary after Christ’s return:

- The elect of God will no longer have a need of this reminder of Christ because they will be immortal spirit-beings in co-rulership with him on earth.
- The physical humans who live under the rule of Christ will not need this reminder because they will be under a different system of worship than those of the New Testament age.

The symbols of the bread and wine appear only to be necessary for the elect of God who are called to participate in the first resurrection, because they are the only ones who need this reminder.

A Change in Observance

It is important to understand that certain aspects of the worship system that God gave to ancient Israel may cease to be necessary or practiced or are changed due to certain circumstances such as the following:

- There is no temple in which the priesthood can officiate.
- Israel ceases to exist as a nation under God’s rule.
- The fulfillment of prophetic and symbolic meaning.
- The advent of the Messiah.
- The consummation of a new agreement.

Under the agreement that was established in 30 A.D. between God the Father and his elect children, there are certain prophetic and symbolic aspects and practices of his worship system that only concern and have meaning for them. After Christ returns, many of today’s practices may no longer be necessary, because the prophetic or symbolic reason for them will have been totally fulfilled.

The Passover Feast

Ezekiel 45:21 — “In the first month on the fourteenth day you are to observe the Passover, a feast lasting seven days, during which you shall eat bread made without yeast.

The English word *feast* in verse 21 is translated from the Hebrew word *hag*, which has the basic meaning of keeping a feast or celebrating a holiday. The word *hag* is usually associated with the mandatory observance of the three festival seasons in which God required all of the males of Israel to appear before him.

The first thing we notice about this future Passover is that it is a mandatory festival, which must be observed for seven days.

The original Passover was a ceremony with a series of rituals that spanned portions of two days and it began with the selection of the sacrificial lamb on the 10th day of the first month. This lamb was then sacrificed before sunset, at the end of the 14th day, and the ceremonial meal and sacrificial lamb were eaten after sunset during the beginning of the first day of Unleavened Bread—the 15th day.

The original Passover was a memorial of Israel's leaving Egypt (symbolic of leaving sin); therefore, it was not observed in a festive way like the other annual festivals. The New Testament Passover is a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ for the redemption of humanity.

This future Passover will be a true festival of rejoicing, as indicated by the Hebrew word *hag* (i.e., festival). This festival will begin on the 14th day of the month, last for seven days, and end on the 20th day of the month, whereas the Festival of Unleavened Bread, including the meal portion of the Passover ceremony, always began on the 15th (the new day began at sundown and the Passover was eaten after the sun had set on the 14th day), lasted seven days, and ended on the 21st of the month.

A Passover for a Different People

The new Passover that will be observed during Christ's rule will be a reminder to physical humanity of the meanings and fulfillment of past Passovers, which culminated in the redemption and justification of humanity. Moreover, it will be a reminder, through the eating of unleavened bread, that the perfecting of a sinless nature is still required in order to obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

There are three categories of people who will observe this future Passover:

1. Those who live through the time of trouble at the end of this age and into the reign of Christ on earth.
2. Those who are born to those living during the reign of Jesus Christ.
3. The resurrected dead of all ages who never had an opportunity for salvation during their lifetime.

These billions of people will observe the new Passover under the government of God, while being taught the lessons of Passovers past and present.

THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

“In the first month in the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten” (Ezk.45:21 Para.).

Although unleavened bread is eaten during this seven day Passover feast, this festival is not called the Feast of Unleavened Bread by Ezekiel; it is called a seven-day Feast of Passover.

It seems that the Feast of Unleavened Bread will no longer be necessary after the return of Christ for the following reasons:

Under God’s agreement with ancient Israel, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a physical reminder of Israel’s departure from Egypt. With the advent of Christ, the symbolism of these days was changed to fit the needs of those being called to salvation after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Wave-Sheaf/Lift Offering that occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread pointed to Christ ascending to his Father as the first son of the Father’s New Creation. This prophetic offering reached its fulfillment through Jesus Christ on the day of the Wave-Sheaf/Lift Offering in 30 A.D.; therefore, it may no longer necessary.

Under the agreement with the elect of God, the Festival of Unleavened Bread points to being delivered out of sin by the sacrifice of Christ, the putting away of sin, and the internalizing of righteousness as symbolized by the eating of unleavened bread for seven days.

Note: Ezekiel also records that there will be animal sacrifices during the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Shelters. We’ll look at the reason for these sacrifices in a later study about the sacrificial system after Christ’s return.

THE FEAST OF WEEKS (PENTECOST)

Originally the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) celebrated the first fruits of the summer wheat harvest. At this festival, two leavened loaves of bread made from the wheat harvest were presented to God for his acceptance. These loaves were symbolic of all the elect of God called to salvation from Adam to Christ and from Christ to the first resurrection.

If this festival is no longer observed, the reason for it being discontinued must be that all of its symbolic and prophetic meanings and the events that it pictures will have been fulfilled prior to Christ’s return.

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

The Feast of Trumpets is prophetic of the return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Therefore, it may no longer be observed after the return of Christ, because he will have returned and the elect of God will be ruling with him.

The Feast of Trumpet's prophetic and symbolic meaning primarily points to events that surround the end of this age of human rule, the first resurrection, and the beginning of Christ's rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Although humanity benefits from the fulfillment of the symbolic and prophetic meanings of this festival, once Jesus returns, the lessons of this feast will be history and will have no future fulfillment. However, the blowing of trumpets may still be a significant part of the commanded observances, just as it was under God's first agreement with national Israel.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The Day of Atonement is celebrated by the children of God as a day of thanksgiving, because they have been purified from all sin through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ and are reconciled to God the Father through this same blood.

Because the means by which reconciliation is made between God and man has already been established through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and because those who participate in the first resurrection will be the examples of this eternal reconciliation, there will probably no longer be a need to celebrate this festival in anticipation of its fulfillment. However, Ezekiel 45:18-24 seems to indicate that the annual purification of the temple may be transferred to the first day of the first month in preparation for the Passover festival. There also exists the possibility that the Day of Atonement may continue to be celebrated as a reminder and an announcement of the Year of Liberty, as it was in ancient Israel.

The Year of Liberty

Although The Day of Atonement is not mentioned specifically by name as being observed after the return of Christ, Ezekiel does mention the year of liberty:

Ezekiel 46:16-18 — “ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: If the prince makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his sons, it will also belong to his descendants; it is to be their property by inheritance. (17) If, however, he makes a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, the servant may keep it until the year of freedom; then it will revert to the prince. His inheritance belongs to his sons only; it is theirs. (18) The prince must not take any of the inheritance of the people, driving them off their property. He is to give his sons their inheritance out of his own property, so that none of my people will be separated from his property’.”

This reference to the year of freedom is important because it was on the Day of Atonement (every seventh year on the Day of Atonement) that the year of release was announced and on every forty-ninth Day of Atonement (forty-ninth year) that the Year of Jubilee (i.e., year of liberty) was announced.

During the year of Jubilee/Liberty all debts were to be released, indentured or purchased servants were to be released from their debt and servitude, and all lands were to be returned to their rightful owners:

Leviticus 25:8-10 — “**Count off seven sabbaths of years — seven times seven years — so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. (9) Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. (10) Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan.**

Because the Year of Jubilee/Liberty is noted and the announcement of its beginning was made on the Day of Atonement, it seems logical that observance of this festival may also continue after the return of Christ and the establishment of the temple system of worship.

Future Fast Days

“And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.”

Although the House of Judah historically observed a fast on the 18th of Tamuz, the 10th of Ab, the 10th of Tishri, the 10th of Tebeth, and the 13th of Adar, none of these fast days, except the Day of Atonement (10th of Tishri), are a part of the observances commanded by God under the first agreement with national Israel. Therefore, this prophecy must be meant for sometime after the return of Jesus Christ. The prophecy does not explain why these “cheerful” days are required; it just says that the House of Judah will observe them.

Ancient Israel

The primary reason for the day of Atonement under the temple system of worship was to purge the nation of Israel and the temple from all physical defilement and the people from all spiritual and moral sin. This was done so that God could continue to dwell among them, and they could continue to have formal access to him and communicate with him in the temple.

Although the purging away of physical defilement and moral/spiritual sin was a continual process throughout the year, under the sacrificial system of worship, it was still necessary to perform a major cleansing once a year to expiate sins that were committed in ignorance.

Because Ezekiel's prophecy clearly shows blood sacrifices being offered for purification, perhaps a yearly cleansing of the future temple will also be necessary.

THE FEAST OF THE SEVENTH MONTH

Ezekiel 45:25 — “**‘During the seven days of the Feast, which begins in the seventh month on the fifteenth day, he is to make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, grain offerings and oil.**

Here, Ezekiel records that there will be a seven day festival beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Additionally, he notes that there will be sacrifices similar to those that will be made during the Passover Feast.

Ezekiel only briefly mentions this festival, but Zechariah was inspired to note a number of things that show the importance of this festival of the seventh month.

Zechariah 14:16-21 Paraphrased

“Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, to celebrate the Feast of Shelters [Hag Sukkot]” (v16).

This clearly says that the Feast of Shelters will be observed by all nations after Christ returns to rule the earth. It is interesting to note that Zechariah identifies the feast as the Feast of Shelters and does not mention its second title—the Feast of Ingathering:

Zechariah 14:17-19 — **If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. (18) If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. [Hag Sukkot] (19) This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles [Hag Sukkot].” See Also Ezk. 45:25.**

It is evident from Zechariah's prophecy that, even after the Kingdom of God is established on earth, God will still allow free moral agency among humans. However, if people continue to disobey God after they are informed of what he expects of them in relation to his system of worship, they will be punished until they understand that God is serious about obedience to him and his laws:

“In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS TO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and boil therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts” (vs.20-21 KJV).

Zechariah clearly shows that there will be a fall festival held in Jerusalem in the same time period as the original Feast of Shelters/Ingathering. Although Zechariah only refers to this future festival of the seventh month as the Feast of Shelters, we should not assume that it will not also be the Feast of Ingathering, because this feast of the seventh month will be observed during an age of the greatest harvest of humanity into the Kingdom of God.

Those who live during this future time, will be a part of the prophetic fall harvest of humanity into the Kingdom of God and they will be looking forward to the fulfillment of the prophetic meaning of the Feast of Shelters.

THE FEAST OF THE EIGHTH DAY

The Feast of the Eighth Day, which occurs after the Feast of the seventh month (i.e., the Feast of Shelters/Ingathering), is also left out of Ezekiel's list of festivals to be observed.

Perhaps, this feast is left out of Ezekiel's list because it has to do with the elect of God who participate in the first resurrection and become a kingdom of kings and priests forever. Because the Feast of the Eighth Day pictures a new beginning after a new earth has been established and God the Father comes to earth, it is possible that out of all of humanity only those who participate in the first resurrection will be directly involved in implementing the next phase of God's plan for his new creation. If so, this would explain why no further formal observance of the Eighth Day would be required after Christ's return. There is also the possibility that this feast may continue to be observed after the return of Christ for the following reasons:

1. The Feast of Shelters/Ingathering is prophetic of dwelling in the protective care and presence of God the Father forever, and the end of the greatest harvest of humanity into the Kingdom of God; therefore, the Eighth Day may be observed, although it is not mentioned by Ezekiel.

2. One of the meanings of the Feast of the Eighth Day is that of a new beginning and it points prophetically to God the Father coming to earth to receive his kingdom from Jesus Christ. The Feast of the Eighth Day also points to the beginning of the next phase of God's plan for his family after all of humanity has had an opportunity for salvation. Because these events will only occur after the prophetic fulfillment of the Feast of Shelters/Ingathering, the Feast of the Eighth day may be observed after the return of Christ.

SUMMARY

Different Festivals for a Different People

With the return of Christ and the establishment of the government of God on earth, much of the literal, prophetic, and symbolic meanings of the commanded observances and holy convocations will have been fulfilled; therefore, the observance of some of these observances and their rituals may be unnecessary, while the observance of others in a different manner, will be necessary.

The scriptures we have reviewed clearly indicate that some observances and festivals will continue to be observed as a reminder and lesson of what was done for the Israelites in bringing them out of Egypt and what Jesus did for humanity in sacrificing his life so that those who repent and follow God's way will be spared from eternal death.

CLOSING HYMN # 60

"Take My Life And Let It Be"

Frances Ridley Havergal, 1874
Henri A. Cesar Malan, 1827

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love,
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only, for my King,
Always only, for my King.

Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee;
Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold,
Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my love, my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee,
Ever, only, all for Thee.

CLOSING WORDS *(In Unison)*

May your love abound more and more, with knowledge and all understanding, so that you may approve what is excellent, and pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness that come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.