

The Feast of Trumpets

preached by Rev. Paul Sakasov on June 10, 2018

This morning we are turning to the fifth sermon in a seven part sermon series on the seven Old Testament feasts. The seven feasts are as follows: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.

Quickly reviewing what we have covered so far, in the first sermon in the series we noted the parallels between Christ's journey to the cross and the journey of the ceremonial Passover lamb from the fields of Bethlehem to the Temple in Jerusalem where it was sacrificed on Good Friday. In the second sermon in the series we looked at all the ways unleavened bread symbolizes the suffering of Christ.

In the third sermon in the series, on the Feast of Firstfruits, we were reminded of the coming harvest, not of grain, but, of souls, and how Christ was the Firstfruit offering of the harvest of mankind. In the fourth sermon in the series, on the Feast of Weeks, also known as Pentecost, we saw how the celebration of the wheat harvest, occurred on the same day that the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai, which was also the same day that the Holy Spirit descended in Jerusalem, giving birth to the church.

In this summary of the four spring feasts, notice that Christ was slaughtered as the Passover Lamb of God during Passover. He was wrapped and buried during Unleavened Bread. He was resurrected on the morning of Firstfruits, and when the Day of Pentecost came, he sent the Holy Spirit to write God's laws on our hearts. This is not a coincidence. It is a part of God's design. Furthermore, it bears witness to the importance of knowing the Old Testament feasts as they give us greater insight into the person and ministry of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And now turning to God's Word, we will be looking at the fifth Old Testament feast, the Feast of Trumpets. The Feast of Trumpets is the first of the fall feasts. Our Scripture reading for this morning, is Leviticus chapter twenty three, verses twenty three through twenty five.

Leviticus 23:23-25

23 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 24 Speak to the people of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of complete rest, a holy convocation commemorated with trumpet blasts. 25 You shall not work at your occupations; and you shall present the Lord's offering by fire.

In today's Scripture reading we read about the Feast of Trumpets. This feast takes place in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, named Tishrei, which corresponds to our

September and October. The Feast of Trumpets, as its title implies, is marked by the blowing of trumpets.

That being said, the trumpet that the Bible refers to in today's reading is not the instrument we imagine when we hear the word, "trumpet." In the Hebrew, the word we translate as trumpet is the word, "Shofar." A shofar is a ram's horn that has had the inner bone removed. It is played in a similar manner to a bugle.

In ancient times, the shofar had multiple purposes. It was used for the calling of assemblies, calling the people to move camps, as an alarm, and during war. They were also blown at the beginning of each month, during days of gladness and solemn assemblies. Finally, the shofar was also sounded during times of offerings and sacrifices as well as during the coronation ceremony of a new king.

In both the Old and New Testament, the shofar, or trumpet, as it is commonly translated, is associated with prophetic declarations pertaining to the day of the Lord. For example, in Joel 2:1, it reads, "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand." In the gospel of Matthew 24:31 it says, "And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other."

This brings us to an important point that was raised in the first sermon in this series. In the preamble of that sermon it was noted that the last three feasts take place in the fall, at the end of the harvest season. In the gospels, Jesus makes many references in his parables to the harvest as being the time of his long awaited return. Could this mean that the last three feasts are signs pointing towards the second coming of Christ? I think a strong case can be made for this conclusion.

First, as we have already seen, the first four feasts, the spring feasts, were fulfilled at the first coming of Christ. Based on this pattern alone, I think it is reasonable to conclude that the last three feasts, the fall feasts, speak about the second coming of Christ. Add to this the connection between the trumpet and the Day of the Lord, and the passage in Matthew which is an explicit reference to the second coming of Christ and the case becomes even stronger.

However, there is so much more. Notice that the Feast of Trumpets, which incidently is better known by its modern name, "Rosh Hashanah," marks the first day of the seven month. In Rabbinical tradition, this is the day that God created the world. And in some Jewish circles it was taught that this was the day that God created Adam. Since the second coming of Christ marks the beginning of the new heaven, and the new earth, and our resurrection to eternal life, when we will be perfectly re-created in the image of Christ, the implications of this parallel are hard to ignore.

Also, note the importance of the number seven. In the Bible, the number seven represents completeness and rest. Beginning in Genesis, God created the world in seven days. Finishing in Revelation, Jesus uses the number seven countless times to describe to John how it will be in the end of days. In Leviticus we are told that the Feast of Trumpets begins in the seventh month, and during the seventh month the seven Old Testament feasts are completed. Again, this is not a coincidence. This is by design, pointing us towards a future reality that God will ultimately fulfill.

Here are some more interesting insights. The Feast of Trumpets begins in the seventh month of the Jewish religious year, and at the beginning of the Jewish civil year. Thus, the date symbolizes both the beginning and the end. In the book of Revelation, Jesus says that he is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end.

In the days of Jesus, when the date of the Feast of Trumpets was being calculated it was necessary for two witnesses to verify the sighting of the new moon that established the beginning of the seventh month. In those days the Rabbis wanted to be sure they hadn't made a mistake. Thus, in contrast to the times of Moses, when Trumpets was celebrated once, in Jesus' day, the Feast of Trumpets was celebrated on two dates, just to make sure that they got it right. Thus, the belief in Jesus' day was that the people could always be certain of the season, but no one could pin point the day and the hour when Trumpets began.

These traditions bring to mind the two witnesses that John mentions in Revelation, whom God will send to prophecy in the last days. They also bring to mind the words of Jesus who in his comments about the end times said in Matthew 24:36 "No one know about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."

Continuing with some more commentary, according to Jewish tradition, on the day of Trumpets, God would open up his books in heaven, the books of life, and then wait for the Day of Atonement to make His judgements. In the ten days that separated the two feasts, it was believed that a person had an opportunity to seek forgiveness for their sins and thus escape the wrath of God.

This was important to do because on the Day of Atonement, it was believed that God decided whether a person would live or die that year and whether they would be blessed or cursed. As a result, the ten days between the feasts of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement were the most important dates in the Jewish calendar; in the days of Jesus and in modern times as well.

For it is in those dates that the nation experienced a heightened awareness that each person would face the judgement of God. As a result, they sought to prepare themselves for that day of reckoning by confessing their sins and seeking reconciliation in any of their

relationships they thought might be strained.

This imagery brings to mind the words of John recorded in Revelation 20:12-15 which states, 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Those are rather sobering words. And they are a perfect reflection of what the Feast of Trumpets was all about. It was an annual reminder to the Jewish people that they would each be held accountable by their Maker for their actions. It was an annual reminder that life and death hung in the balance and that they needed to make good decisions. It was an annual reminder that God is gracious and willing to forgive all who repent.

Furthermore, in much the same way that many of us make New Year’s resolutions, Trumpets was a time of sober reflection where the believer could take stock of their life, identify the things that they needed to change, and turn over a new leaf at the beginning of the civic year. This is what the Feast of Trumpets was all about.

And this is the message that it still speaks to us today. Even in our modern age, it is a reminder that the day of judgement will soon be upon us. And each one of us will stand before our Maker and give an account for our lives. And life and death, heaven and hell hang in the balance. This means the Day of the Lord is not something to be taken lightly. It is a reality that should lead us to engage in sober reflection upon our lives, it should lead us to a place where we confess our sins, it should lead us to a place where we seek reconciliation in relationships that are strained, and it should lead to a place where we seek to redeem the time we have left to seek the face of God and do what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

At the same time, the Feast of Trumpets is a reminder that we serve a God who is merciful and who will save those who call upon the name of the Lord. It is also a reminder that the God who created the world, and redeemed the world through His Son, Jesus Christ, will one day complete His redemptive work and make all things new on the glorious and quickly approaching Day of the Lord. Praise be to God. Come, Lord Jesus, come!