

# **Truth for Today**

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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**Broadcast Date:** 4 March 2012

**No.** T0718

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## **A Study of Scripture Sevens: The Feasts of Jehovah Part 2 - Leviticus 23:23-44**

Last week we looked at the Sabbath, the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks. The Sabbath occurred every week. The Passover was on the 14th day of the first month, which was Nisan (Abib) (Leviticus 23:5), and was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:6). Afterwards came the Feast of the Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14). The feast of Weeks, Pentecost, was celebrated, after a further seven Sabbaths, in the month of Sivan (Leviticus 23:15-22).

In regard to dispensational teaching, the Sabbath, the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread have been associated with Christ's sacrifice; the Feast of the Firstfruits with Christ's resurrection; the Feast of Weeks with Pentecost and the formation of the Church.

The final three feasts - the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles - have been linked, in dispensational teaching, to the awakening of Israel, the reception of their Messiah and their future millennial blessings.

These three feasts all took place in the month called Tishri. The Feast of Trumpets began on the first day of the month. The Day of Atonement was on the tenth day. Then on the 15th day of Tishri, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated.

### **Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25)**

This morning we are going to look at Leviticus 23:23-44, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets, "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 23:23-25).

The feast of trumpets marked the beginning of the civil year - the new year's on the first day of Tishri. Trumpets were blown to mark the completion of the agricultural season. It is described as a Sabbath, when there was a rest from normal work and sacrifice to the Lord was made.

In Numbers 10 we read about two silver trumpets made to God's instructions. "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Make two silver trumpets for yourself; you shall make them of hammered work'" (Numbers 10:1-2).

The trumpets were made of silver. Silver was a mark of wealth and was used as a currency by weight. The atonement money was silver - compare Exodus 30:11-16 and Exodus 38:25-28. This silver was used to make the foundations on which the boards of the tabernacle stood. Silver was also used to value people and animals (see Leviticus 27). The Lord Jesus was betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15, 27:3). Silver had a close association with the cost of redemption. The trumpets had an added feature because they were described as hammered work. I remember in my metalwork classes at school many years ago hammering out a piece of copper to make a bowl. It was a long and painstaking exercise, but the result was a very attractive, though in my case not exactly perfect, ornament. The hammered silver suggests the cost and suffering involved in redemption and the silver trumpets might indicate how all the directions given to God's people were based on His redeeming power.

The silver trumpets were used to call the people of God together and to direct their movements, "you shall use them for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps" (Numbers 10:2).

When they were blown together all the congregation gathered, "When they blow both of them, all the congregation shall gather before you at the door of the tabernacle of meeting" (Numbers 10:3).

If they were blown once, the leaders gathered, "But if they blow only one, then the leaders, the heads of the divisions of Israel, shall gather to you" (Numbers 10:4).

They were also used to get the whole camp of the children of Israel to move, "When you sound the advance, the camps that lie on the east side shall then begin their journey. When you sound the advance the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall begin their journey; they shall sound the call for them to begin their journeys." (Numbers 10:5-6).

The trumpets were used to gather all the people together, "And when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow, but not sound the advance" (Numbers 10:7).

Aaron and the priests had the responsibility for blowing the trumpets, "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an ordinance forever throughout your generations" (Numbers 10:8).

The silver trumpets were also used to call the people to battle and reminded them that God would hear them and save them, "When you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the LORD your God, and you will be saved from your enemies" (Numbers 10:9).

Finally, and of particular interest to us in connection with the Feast of Trumpets, the silver trumpets were to be used in appointed feasts and at the beginning of months, "Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the LORD your God" (Numbers 10:10).

Rams' horns are mentioned in Joshua 6, "Then Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, 'Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.' And he said to the people, 'Proceed, and march around the city, and let him who is armed advance before the ark of the LORD'" (Joshua 6:6-7).

Given that there were only two silver trumpets and, one assumes, they were based in Jerusalem, these rams' horns may have been used in the cities and towns in Israel when they came into the land. The ram's horns are another powerful reminder of redemption. It was a ram which Abraham sacrificed instead of Isaac (Genesis 22:1-19), a wonderful picture of substitution. This happened after Abraham had told his son that God would provide a lamb (Genesis 22:8), and looked forward to the coming of Jesus as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). The brazen altar, in the Tabernacle, had a horn at each of its corners (Exodus 27:2).

We can see that God, in His word, uses objects, which to us may seem unusual, to illustrate features of His redeeming work.

The Feast of Trumpets called the nation together so that they could rest and reflect on how God had redeemed and blessed them. Dispensationally, it can be seen as an illustration of how, in a future day, Israel will be called by God and the scattered nation reunited.

### **The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32)**

The next feast was the Day of Atonement. "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD'" (Leviticus 23:26-27).

The Day of Atonement was a very solemn occasion. The expression "afflict your souls" is mentioned three times and relates to repentance. The people had a real sense of the consequences of sin.

"And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God" (Leviticus 23:28). "No work" is also mentioned three times and highlights how righteousness is by faith not by works. "For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people" (Leviticus 23:29-30).

We come to God recognising our sins and our need of a salvation we cannot provide for ourselves. God's love is displayed in the provision of a substitute - Christ. We understand there is nothing we can do to bring about our own salvation, but we are saved by faith in what God has done. If we ignore this, we remain separated from Him.

"You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath" (Leviticus 23:31-32).

If we see no need of God's salvation or believe our works can save us, we are rejecting the love and grace of God. We are saying, in effect, "I don't need God's salvation and Christ's sacrifice is of no value."

The Day of Atonement is presented in detail in Leviticus 16:1-34. It was a yearly event in the calendar of the Jewish people and, like so many Old Testament rituals, it served to look forward to the one true sacrifice - the death of Christ. The Day of Atonement was on a single day in the year and foreshadowed the day on which Christ would die. At the same time it embraced the vastness of the work of Christ. A bull was sacrificed as a sin offering for Aaron and his house (Leviticus 16:6). Atonement was made first for the priesthood - those nearest to God. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25). For the whole nation, one goat was sacrificed as a sin offering and the second goat was released into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:8-10). Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26). The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the mercy seat and also on the altar in the court of the tabernacle (Leviticus 16:15-18). This great brazen altar is an illustration of the place where Christ offered Himself for the sin of the whole world; and that sacrifice is the basis for the reconciliation of all things (see Colossians 1:20).

In dispensational teaching, the Day of Atonement looks forward to the spiritual awakening of Israel and the return of the Messiah, this time not as the lowly Jesus of Nazareth, but as the Lord of lords and the King of kings. The redemption of Israel can be seen first in their deliverance from Egypt, later in their deliverance from Babylon and finally, in a coming day, from among the nations to inherit millennial blessing.

### **Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44)**

The last of the three feasts in this morning's chapter is the Feast of Tabernacles. The feast fell on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and continued for seven days, during which the people of Israel dwelt in booths in remembrance of having lived in tents after God brought them out of Egypt.

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it"' (Leviticus 23:33-36).

The command to do no customary work (Leviticus 23:26) allowed the people of God to focus on worshipping God and also to remember God blessed them on the basis of who He was and what He had done, not on what they were or their own works. The Lord Jesus, when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14-23), established the same principle of remembrance. In His supper, by breaking bread, a picture of His body, and drinking wine, a picture of His shed blood, we remember His love and sacrifice for us at the cross of Calvary. We also enter into the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit and the cup is also described as a cup of blessing.

The offering associated with the Feast of Tabernacles is a response of worship to God in appreciation for all He had done for them.

"These are the feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day - besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the LORD" (Leviticus 23:37-38).

The offering included grain and wine, similar to the bread and wine of Christ's supper and typical of fellowship and joy - key features of this final feast. There is a real sense of the enjoyment of God's grace towards His people and an opportunity to express their joy in God.

"Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest" (Leviticus 23:39).

The eighth day highlights all the fruitfulness of resurrection. I base this on what Jesus says in John 7:37-39 when He spoke in Jerusalem at the Feast of the Tabernacles, "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Jesus looked forward to the outcome of His own death, resurrection and ascension, in the descent and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It was a new beginning - the eighth day. He adds to this in John 12:24 when He illustrates the fruitfulness of His death and resurrection by a grain of wheat falling into the ground and bringing forth much fruit.

The Bible describes the creation as taking place over seven days (Genesis 1:1-2:3). The idea of the eighth day may represent the thought of eternity - the day of God described by Peter, "looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat! Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:12-13).

This gives a wider thought in regard to God's instruction in Leviticus 23:40, "And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days."

Dwelling in booths looked back to the joy of redemption when the Children of Israel came out of Egypt but I think it also looked forward in three senses.

1. As a divided nation the children of Israel went into captivity, to Assyria and later Babylon, but when they returned from Babylon in Ezra 3:4 they kept the Feast of Tabernacles.
2. Zechariah 14:16 refers to the millennial celebration of the same feast.
3. I think the sense of what Peter says about the Day of God, in which righteousness dwells 2 Peter 3: 13, is conveyed in this beautiful final feast.

"You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths" (Leviticus 23:41-42).

The picture is one of resting in all that God has done and the true fulfilment of this is God's eternal rest. The booths were, as we read earlier (Leviticus 23:40), made from beautiful trees: palms, leafy trees and willows. The Bible begins and ends with a beautiful tree: "the tree of Life" in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) and "the tree of Life" in Revelation 22:2 which, interestingly, had leaves which were for the healing of the nations. The willow is identified in the Bible as a flourishing tree which grew by rivers (Isaiah 44:4). Palms are associated with the praise of Christ as He entered Jerusalem in John 12:13.

But the willows were also associated with suffering, "By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, and those who plundered us requested mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'" (Psalm 137:1-3).

After the redemption of Israel from Egypt, in Exodus 15:1-21 Moses, the people and then Miriam sang of the greatness of God. But afterwards they came to the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15:22-27). It was then Moses was shown a tree by God and, when he cast it into bitter water, the water became fresh (Exodus 15:25). God then led them from Marah to Elim where there were twelve wells and seventy palms trees. (Exodus 15:27)

Trees were powerful pictures of life, healing and blessing and this was demonstrated, in its truest sense, when Christ died at Calvary. "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

This gives a wider thought in regard to God's instruction in the final verses of our chapter, "And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days" (Leviticus 23:40), then "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.' So Moses declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD" (Leviticus 23:43-44).

All of our blessings are based on the redemptive work of Christ. We have not only been saved from the penalty of sin, and are being saved from its power but in a future day we shall be saved from its presence. Ultimately the Bible promises through Christ an entrance into God's presence and all the joy of God eternally.

Perhaps this morning we can pause for a moment and bring to the One who has loved us and given Himself for us the gratitude, praise and worship of redeemed hearts.

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