

## Theory #5

### God's Prophetic Calendar

Besides embedding within the Genesis 1 creation account an illustration of His ultimate purpose, God has given several other prophetic clues to His planned agenda for mankind. For example, one can study the story of redemption as it is hidden in the constellations. Psalm 19 tells us: "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard (speaking of the stars). (But) their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world."

Here is another version: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." Psalm 19:1-4

In other words, you don't need to be able to read and write or have money to buy books to know the story of redemption. It is written in the stars and has been known among the ancients for thousands of years. References to these accounts are noted in Matthew 2, for example, when the magi came from the East searching for the promised Messiah based on seeing His sign in the stars. This was not the raving of primitive, superstitious or necessarily pagan astrologers, but the genuine response of learned men to information that was gleaned from the wise men and astronomers of Babylon, probably conveyed to them originally by the prophet Daniel during his captivity in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Ancient believers were familiar with the fact that God had placed His story in the stars and they passed this information on to subsequent generations.

The constellations of the Zodiac<sup>1</sup> move and interact with one another, telling this story for all those who have eyes to see. The names of these constellations were known from the earliest days, as some of them are recorded in the book of Job, believed to be the earliest book of the Bible. Genesis 1 tells us that the lights that God placed in the expanse of the heavens were to not only separate the day from the night, but to function as signs (and to mark seasons, days and years.) I believe the reference to God setting the stars in place in Gen.1:14 is a reference to the constellations through which God would tell His redemptive story, as signs to those on earth who would take these verses literally.<sup>2</sup> These signs transcend mere storytelling however. They are sign-*posts*, literally written in the stars, telling of events that are about to happen in real time. Like astronomical prophets, sentries standing as mute heralds of impending events, they forecast the immediate future. The juxtaposition of constellations sometimes produces rare spectacles. Here is one of them:

Chapter 12 of the book of the Revelation says, “And a *great sign appeared in heaven*: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth, he might devour her child....And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”

As I understand it, there are literally conjunctions in the stars that, at a certain point in history, tell this story. The constellation called Bethulah, the Hebrew word for “virgin,” represents this woman (more commonly known as Virgo, but representing Israel) and one called Draco represents the dragon, and another one represents the child. The woman in the constellation appears to stand on the moon and

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<sup>1</sup> The Zodiac, just like everything else, has been counterfeited by Satan for his own deceptive and dark purposes. Hence, the “science” of astrology.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning that this may not be concurrent with the creation of the universe as a whole and all of its galaxies, but that Genesis is describing the refurbishing of the earth for man’s habitation. So the stars placed in v.14 are those that would be meaningful to mankind as signs. The sun and the moon were placed as indicators of seasons and years and to control weather.

has twelve stars clustered around her head, another constellation. The dragon constellation actually appears to be cast down to earth in its movement across the night sky. The woman is “clothed with the sun” because at the point where this constellation tells its story, the sun is below the horizon, thereby allowing the constellation to be seen. Astronomers who study these verses can predict when these alignments will take place.

The prophetic signs in the stars are a fascinating study and one that brings infinitely greater richness to some of these enigmatic passages in Scripture.<sup>3</sup> Even the names of these constellations, preserved from antiquity, and the individual stars comprising them indicate their relevance to the redemptive story: one star is called The Branch (Jesus is called a branch from the stem of Jesse and My Servant the Branch); Coma (The Woman and Child); Victima (The Victim Slain); Crux (The Cross); Serpens (The Serpent); Orion (The Coming Light). Other stars are named Arm of the Lord, Chief Shepherd, Desired of All Nations, Governor, Great Shepherd of the Sheep, King, Lamb, Light, Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Prince, Redeemer, Scepter, Wounded One, Bruised. The Bible says that God calls the stars by name. Early Jewish historian Josephus says they were named by Seth, the third son of Adam. Whatever the case, the stars declare the glory of God and the plan of salvation, in detail. (Ps.19:1) From the earliest days, before the Bible was written, mankind has been able to know the redemptive story through the witness God has placed in the heavens.

For more on this subject, one could visit [www.biblicalastronomy.com](http://www.biblicalastronomy.com). Robert Scott Wadsworth has spent the greater part of his adult life studying these truths. His CD, “Biblical Astronomy: A Voice Crying in the Heavens” is worth watching for content. Another site, <http://www.philologos.org> carries the book, “The Witness of the Stars” by EW Bullinger, written in 1893. Or read “God’s Voice in the Stars: Zodiac Signs and Bible Truth” by Kenneth C. Fleming. Also “The Gospel in the Stars” by Joseph A. Seiss.

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<sup>3</sup> Some sites that specialize in these astronomical phenomena are: [www.biblicalastronomy.com](http://www.biblicalastronomy.com); <http://philologos.org/eb-tws/default.htm>;

## **ECLIPSES**

There are also certain solar and lunar eclipses that serve as messages to mankind: particular lunar eclipses speak to the nation of Israel, and certain solar eclipses speak to the Gentiles. There have been interesting patterns of eclipses appearing on particular Jewish feast days that seem to be sending certain messages to the nation of Israel. The pattern is repeated when events of huge significance happen in Israel's history: the eviction of all Jews from Spain in the 15<sup>th</sup> century; the reestablishment of the state of Israel; and the recapture of Jerusalem all were heralded with a particular and very precise pattern of eclipses. We will share more about this (in Theory #13) in relation to the Rapture<sup>4</sup> of the Church.

## **THE FEASTS of ISRAEL**

Another device God has built into His prophetic calendar comprises the seven annual Feasts of Israel. The first four feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and Weeks) occur in the spring each year and were instituted by God (see Leviticus 23) to commemorate the major events associated with Israel's Exodus from slavery in Egypt and the giving of the Law. The feasts themselves were designed as reminders, to insure that subsequent generations would not forget all that God had done on behalf of His chosen people. The Jews were to tell the story of God's redemption to their children down through the ages. But the feasts were also designed as prophetic types or illustrations picturing *future* events that would fulfill those feasts in a spiritual sense.<sup>5</sup> To make it even more phenomenal, each future prophetic event typified by the feasts has been or will be fulfilled on the very day of the feast that represents it! None of this could have been contrived by man. It is far too complex and its fulfillment stretches over the intervening centuries and millennia.

The prophetic events represented by the four spring feasts have already been fulfilled, and all in one year, which we detail below. The three fall feasts begin in the Hebrew month of Tishri (corresponding to our September /October and the seventh month of the Hebrew religious calendar) and are yet to be

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<sup>4</sup> The sudden "catching-away" of believers to heaven.

<sup>5</sup> For example, instead of being delivered from slavery in Egypt, Jesus delivers us from slavery to sin. Instead of the Law of Moses, God writes His Law on our hearts so that we no longer need a list of rules. This occurred at the first Pentecost after Christ died when the Holy Spirit was given to the Church as a spiritual teacher, counselor and guide.

fulfilled, but there is every reason to believe that they will be fulfilled literally on the very day each feast occurs, just as the spring feasts have been, and probably all in the same year as well.

Let's look at these seven feasts and what they signify in more detail.

## THE SPRING FEASTS

The spring feasts begin in the month of Nisan (in Hebrew called Abib and corresponding most closely to our March), the first month in the Jewish religious calendar.<sup>6</sup> As we said, they revolve around Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. (God graciously executed this plan on the night of the full moon so that Israel could see in the dark.)

The four spring feasts are:

- 1) Passover
- 2) Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 3) Feast of First Fruits
- 4) Feast of Weeks

Let's look at them one by one.

**#1: Passover** is the feast that commemorates events at the end of Israel's captivity in Egypt. The Hebrews had gone into Egypt originally because there was severe famine in the land of Canaan. Eventually, after Joseph<sup>7</sup> died, they became slaves there and for 400 years<sup>8</sup> labored under the oppression of tyranny. Finally God raised up Moses to deliver them out of bondage and back into the

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<sup>6</sup> Nisan corresponds roughly to our March or April. Its inception is determined by the first new moon following the vernal equinox.

<sup>7</sup> The story of Israel's sojourn and captivity in Egypt begins in Genesis 37. If you remember, Jacob had 12 sons. Joseph, the second to youngest, was a favorite of his father and thus was despised by his older brothers. They eventually sold him to Midianite traders who took him to Egypt. Joseph later distinguished himself in service to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer and captain of the bodyguard, and eventually became second to Pharaoh in authority. Joseph's brothers came to Egypt in search of food many years later not knowing that Joseph had risen to such a position of power. Eventually they reconciled and the whole family including Jacob himself came to Egypt and settled there. Later, when the Pharaoh that knew Joseph died, the Israelites were placed into slavery in the land. Finally, 400 years later God raised up Moses to lead His chosen people out of captivity into the Promised Land.

<sup>8</sup> They were there a total of 430 years to the very day, according to Ex. 12:40-41.

Promised Land of milk and honey that God had bequeathed to Abraham so many centuries before.<sup>9</sup> If you remember, there were 10 plagues that God brought on the Egyptians before Pharaoh would let the people go.<sup>10</sup> The last plague was the death of every first-born of man and beast in all the land of Egypt. The Hebrews were spared from this plague by sacrificing an unblemished lamb and sprinkling its blood on the lintel and doorposts of their dwellings. This sign identified them as followers of Almighty God and the death angel “passed over” their houses during the night and they were spared; thus the name “Passover.”

Amazingly, Jesus was slain hundreds of years later as Israel’s prophesied Passover Lamb on the very day of Passover, most probably in 30 AD, thus fulfilling this feast day.<sup>11</sup> Not only was He slain on the very day, but He died at the very hour when the evening sacrifice was offered (3 pm).<sup>12</sup> Passover is the feast that represents **Faith** (the Israelites had to trust God’s word that they would be spared from the death angel if they followed His instructions) and also **Salvation** or **Redemption**. It is detailed in Lev. 23:5 and Ex. 12:5.

There is much symbolism in this literal event called Passover from antiquity.

- Egypt represents Satan’s kingdom, and bondage to sin.
- Pharaoh represents Satan who holds us as captive slaves and doesn’t want to let us go.
- The houses of the Israelites represent our souls that are saved from death (separation from God) by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, our Savior.
- Moses represents Jesus, our heavenly Deliverer.
- The Red Sea represents separation, being “set apart,” the crossing over from death to life that starts us on our journey of sanctification.<sup>13</sup>
- The wilderness wandering represents the subsequent trials, tests and tribulations of the

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<sup>9</sup> Gen. 15:18

<sup>10</sup> Exodus 7–12: Ten plagues: Waters turned to blood, swarms of frogs, gnats, insects, pestilence on livestock, boils, hail, locusts, thick darkness, death of the first born.

<sup>11</sup> See Passover Chart following this chapter for details on the fulfillment of this feast.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, He was bound to the cross according to John’s gospel at the time of the morning sacrifice (9am) when the lambs were bound to the horns of the altar. He died concurrent with the slaughter of the lambs for the evening sacrifice.

<sup>13</sup> Remember Pharaoh pursued them to the Red Sea, and his army was drowned when the waters returned to their normal flow.

sanctification process after we are saved out of Satan's kingdom.<sup>14</sup> It is during this period that God's camp is purged of false brethren. (Sin in the camp is unacceptable.) The tests are designed to reveal those who are only interested in what they can get out of God, but do not really love Him.

- The Law given on Mt. Sinai represents the righteousness that God expects of His children but which we cannot achieve without the Holy Spirit. (The Law was given on Pentecost.) It also represents the covenant nature of our relationship with God.
- The Jordan River represents the transition to true, mature faith after we have been sorely tested. Those who are disobedient and faithless do not make this transition. (Heb. 3:8-19)
- The giants in the Land represent demonic obstacles to abundant life and the battles we must fight in order to learn how to be co-laborers with Christ as He reclaims and rules over His Kingdom. (Testing, discipline, purification and warfare precede our accession into glory and peace. We must fight the good fight of faith in order to be victorious.)
- The Promised Land represents the peaceful fruit of righteousness, the Kingdom of Heaven, the Millennium, abundant life and sanctified living.

The term "Passover"<sup>15</sup> eventually came to signify the entire week of festivities including Passover, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits.

**#2: Unleavened Bread** was a seven-day feast that began the day after the preparation day initially called Passover. All leaven was to be removed from the homes during the preparation day, prior to the commencement of this feast (because no work could be done on the Feast of Unleavened Bread<sup>16</sup>). Anyone who violated this edict was to be cut off from the people. Why? Because leaven puffs up. It pictures pride (or a puffed-up heart), the sin that predisposes mankind to rebellion. Rebellion is unacceptable before God. It also symbolizes sin in general. This feast, then, symbolizes the

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<sup>14</sup> Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years. Forty is the number of testing. We struggle with the allure of the old life and our old sin patterns during this testing period and some actually fall back into them. Some Israelites did fall in the wilderness and were not able to enter the Promised Land because of disobedience. This is a good indication that faith and obedience are required if we want to enter heaven. Heb. 3:17-19

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, God also instituted a makeup Passover 30 days after the normal Passover for those who were not ready (ritually unclean, those who had recently touched a dead body or were otherwise defiled) or who were on a long journey. (You can read about this in Numbers 9.)

<sup>16</sup> Ex. 12:15-20

identification and admission of our guilt and removal of pride from our hearts through repentance. Without Christ's sacrifice as the Passover Lamb and our repentance, we cannot be forgiven, and without repentance and forgiveness, we cannot become unleavened nor can we be filled with the Spirit. We must continually evict pride and rebellion from our lives and not indulge it or we will lose fellowship with God and His Church. (1 Cor. 6:9,10) In our natural state, we are slaves to sin and full of leaven. Jesus, on the other hand, is the unleavened "Bread of Life." He was born in Bethlehem, which translates "house of bread." We become little "houses of Bread" when we clean out our leaven and He is born in us. Only after our sins are forgiven can our cleansed (unleavened) "houses" literally house the unleavened Bread of Life. Thus this feast may represent **Repentance** from the bondage of sin and **Sanctification** or **Purification**.

**#3: Feast of First Fruits**, as defined in Scripture, was to be held on the day after the first regular sabbath following Passover, thus on a Sunday.<sup>17</sup> (Lev. 23:11) At the onset of the spring barley harvest, Israel was required to offer a wave offering to the Lord from the fruit of the ground. The barley sheaf was still green and was called "the first fruits." Jesus rose from the grave at the very beginning of this feast,<sup>18</sup> fully three days and three nights after He was laid to rest,<sup>19</sup> thus fulfilling this prophetic feast on the very day it was celebrated.<sup>20</sup> The barley sheaf symbolizes Jesus, and His resurrection is symbolized by the waving of it in the air before the priest. He was "the First Fruits of our redemption,"<sup>21</sup> "the firstborn among many brothers." (Ro. 8:29) This feast, then, represents **Hope** in *our* eventual **Resurrection** as the Bride of Christ. Paul tells us: "For since by a man (Adam) came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> (This is not how the Jews calculate it.) Interesting that the resurrection occurred on a Sunday as did Pentecost; perhaps a nod to the Gentile Church who may also be raptured to heaven on a Sunday.

<sup>18</sup> Probably on Saturday night shortly after sundown, which in Jewish reckoning was the start of Sunday.

<sup>19</sup> Which according to our reading of Scripture occurred on a Wednesday just at sundown. See Passover Chart following this chapter for details on the timing of the crucifixion and resurrection.

<sup>20</sup> And fulfilling the prophecy of Jonah. Jesus said no sign would be given to Israel except the sign of the prophet Jonah who was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish; so the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor.15:20

(1Cor.15:21-23) Thus we will all follow Him in resurrection if we continue in faith. Scripture says that we are “a new creation. Old things have passed away. New things have come.”

**Transition:** Between the third and fourth feasts is a transition period of seven weeks. And between the regular sabbath of Passover week and Pentecost is 50 days, which is where the name Pentecost comes from. Fifty is the number of rejoicing and symbolizes the forgiving of debts. Seven, on the other hand, is the biblical number of completion. During this seven-week transition, Jesus' mission was completed. For the first 40 days after His resurrection, He appeared in and around Jerusalem showing Himself as having risen from the dead. He appeared to His apostles in a locked room, touched them, ate with them, and appeared to as many as 500 people at one time. This was to prove the resurrection. (Forty is the number of testing.) Then He told His disciples to return to Jerusalem and wait for the Promise from the Father, after which He commissioned them to preach the good news of salvation to all men and then was taken up to heaven bodily in their sight. Ten days later the Holy Spirit was given to the believers who had assembled in Jerusalem to wait for the Promise and the Church was officially born. Keep this 40/10 transition period in mind, as we will discuss it more later.

**#4: The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)** is the fourth feast of the year and as we said above, is held 50 days after the first regular sabbath following Passover. Seven sabbaths were counted, and the next day was celebrated as Pentecost or Shavuot. The Feast of Weeks therefore is always on a Sunday (but the Jews don't count it this way today). You can read about it in Lev. 23:15-21.

Pentecost was also a symbol of the Jubilee. Jubilees were instituted by God and were mandated to occur every 50 years in Israel. Though Israel failed to carry out these instructions, they were required by God to free all Jewish slaves or indentured servants and forgive all debts every seven years (called a sabbatical year). After seven sabbatical years had passed, on the next (fiftieth) year all land was to revert to its original owner as well. This was to insure that a wealthy land-owning class did not develop in Israel, but that each tribe retained its inheritance down through the ages. Jews were also not supposed to charge interest on their loans. This was God's way of keeping capitalism from getting out of hand, preventing inflation and making certain that the rich didn't just keep getting richer and the

poor poorer. It gave those who had fallen on hard times an opportunity to regain their footing and start over. It was supposed to be a joyful time and Pentecost perfectly reflects that.

And spiritually, as the Jewish believers were filled with the Holy Spirit on that very day in 30 AD, their slavery to Satan was abolished, their sin-debt was paid, and they were returned to their rightful owner, God the Father. It is a time of renewal of purpose, hope, celebration, and rejoicing in God's provision. On this feast two leavened loaves, made of soft white winter wheat<sup>23</sup> (which was the current crop<sup>24</sup>), were waved before the Lord, possibly representing both Jewish and Gentiles believers, or perhaps dead and living believers. This waving of the loaves may symbolize the rapture of the Church, just as the waving of the green barley sheaf represents the resurrection of Christ.

Historically, this feast is said to memorialize the day that the Law was given to Israel on Mt. Sinai (50 days after leaving Egypt), inaugurating the Old Covenant between God and the nation of Israel. At this event, thunder, lightening, and a thick cloud shrouded the mountain and loud trumpet blasts were heard. So loud the people standing at a distance in the valley below trembled. Fire singed the top of the mountain. This was more than likely the first trumpet of God. After Moses had been on the mountain for 40 days receiving the 10 commandments, the people fell into sin and worshipped the golden calf. Three thousand men *died* that day.<sup>25</sup> (Again, 40 is the number of testing and Israel was tested during this interlude. Would they remain faithful to God during Moses' absence?)

This feast was *fulfilled* when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the fledgling Church at Pentecost, inaugurating the *New Covenant* between Jesus and His Bride. A noise from heaven like a violent, rushing wind filled the house where they were assembled and tongues of fire appeared above their heads. The disciples were transformed that day from fearful followers to bold witnesses and they turned Jerusalem upside down. Three thousand souls were given *new* life that day so many centuries

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<sup>23</sup> God created two kinds of wheat: soft white winter wheat that is planted in the fall, and hard red spring wheat that is planted in the spring. The soft white wheat may represent those believers who have genuinely soft hearts toward God and who are striving to act righteously in the world. Hard red spring wheat, which is harvest in the fall, may represent those believers who are not counted worthy at the Rapture and have to endure part or all of the Tribulation (symbolized by the red color) before they are rescued, or it may represent those who come to faith during the painful Tribulation period.

<sup>24</sup> Ex. 34:22

<sup>25</sup> Ex. 32:28

later as they repented, were baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. This feast then could be said to represent **Heart Relationship, Transformation and Empowerment**, the entrance of the Holy Spirit and the Church Age. The Church, comprising both Jewish and Gentile believers, was empowered at Pentecost to carry out Christ's commands and to be His hands and feet. (The Jewish believers are the rootstock of the olive tree, and the Gentiles are the wild olive branch that is grafted onto the Jewish root.)

There are some who believe that since the Church<sup>26</sup> began on Pentecost, it will also end on a feast day, very possibly a future Pentecost or perhaps Rosh Hashanah. The "last trumpet" of God is set to blow at this event, the rapture of the Church to heaven. See the Passover Chart following this chapter for a depiction of the various ways God fulfilled the spring feasts.

#### **FOUR-MONTH INTERVAL**

Exactly four months intervene between the spring feasts and the fall feasts. Four is the number of testing. The world and the Jews are being tested during the almost 2000-year interval<sup>27</sup> (2000 = 40 Jubilees) between the spiritual fulfillment of the spring feasts and the fulfillment of the fall feasts.<sup>28</sup> Will the world accept their Messiah? Time is running out. James says, speaking to believers in James 5:7: "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil (the harvest), being patient about it, until it gets the early and the late rains." This may be a hint that the spiritual harvest of the Church will conclude with "the latter rains" in the spring.

This four-month interval may also symbolize the time of testing, purging and sanctification that the Church will undergo before she is caught up to glory. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 4:12-19: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are

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<sup>26</sup> The Church being those who have received Jesus personally, as their Lord, Savior and future Bridegroom.

<sup>27</sup> Why *almost* 2000 years? Because God will "shorten the time" to prevent the annihilation of the human race. See Theory #6 for more on this.

<sup>28</sup> Hosea says, "Come let us return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days (2000 years); He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him."

reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed but in that name let him glorify God. For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man (atheist) and the sinner? Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.”

## THE FALL FEASTS

Let's look at these three fall feasts in more detail.

**The Feast of Trumpets**<sup>29</sup> is the first feast in the fall cycle. It occurs on the first day of the month of Tishri (sometime during our September/October).<sup>30</sup> Tishri is the seventh month of the religious calendar for Israel and the first month of the civil calendar. It is also called Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. (Seven is the number of completion and with the fulfillment of these final three feasts in the seventh month, the redemptive plan of God is finished.)

This feast is to be a high sabbath, a holy convocation. No work is to be done. It is a day of rest, with blowing of trumpets. Some believe that this day will be fulfilled by the **Rapture** of the Church, seven years prior to the Second Coming of Christ. Paul says in 1 Cor.15:51-55: “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump*; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

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<sup>29</sup> Lev.23:24

<sup>30</sup> Trumpets is believed by some to be the day that the city of Jericho fell. Israel had walked around the city once a day for six days and on the seventh day they walked around the city seven times, blew their trumpets and shouted and the walls of the city fell down flat and they took the city. I don't know of any biblical evidence for this theory.

Others do not believe it is fulfilled by the Rapture because they believe there is no way of knowing when the Rapture will happen. Some do not believe the “trumpet of God” mentioned by Paul in his description of the Rapture<sup>31</sup> is equivalent to the trumpets blown by men at the Feast of Trumpets, but is more akin to the trumpet blasts at the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. Those were clearly blasts from a “trumpet of God.” (Exodus 19:16-19).

Whatever the case, this feast has *some* prophetic significance and will be fulfilled at the Second Coming. We could guess that in some way the Feast of Trumpets heralds the triumphant return of Christ for His own when He returns to save the remnant of Israel from the Anti-Christ’s forces in Bozrah. (See Isaiah 63.)

The Feast of Trumpets starts on the new moon and is the only feast to do so. It is celebrated for two days outside of Jerusalem because it took time for the message of the new moon’s certification to reach the outlying areas. Counting from the start of Rosh Hashanah to the end of Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, there is a total of 10 days. If we count the days *between* these two feasts, there are seven days, representing most likely the Tribulation when Israel is brought to her knees through desperate circumstances. These days are called “days of Awe.”

**The Feast of Atonement**<sup>32</sup> (Yom Kippur) occurs on Tishri 10. It is a Sabbath also, and a day of confession, of humbling one’s soul before God and acknowledging one’s sin. No work may be done. Scripture declares that any Jew who does not comply with this feast would be cut off from his people. Yom Kippur is the most important annual fast-day for Israel, a time of repentance for sin and preparation for judgment. This feast symbolizes the awakening of Israel to her sin of rejecting her Messiah and her need of confession and humiliation. Any Israelite who does not renounce this sin of unbelief when Jesus returns will be cut off from the believing remnant of Israel and assigned a place with the evildoers.

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<sup>31</sup> 1 Thess. 4:13: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout (perhaps “the Bridegroom Cometh!”--the traditional shout of the bridegroom’s entourage as they process to the bride’s home on the wedding day), with the voice of the archangel, and *with the trumpet of God*; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

<sup>32</sup> Lev. 23:27-32

In Matthew 23:37-39, Jesus says: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’” At the Second Coming, Zechariah tells us that Israel will look on Him whom they have pierced (Jesus) and will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son: “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”<sup>33</sup> And the book of Revelation tells us: “Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen.”<sup>34</sup> So we can safely say this feast represents Israel’s **Grief**, and **Repentance** over her failure. It may also symbolize the **Return** of Jesus in power and glory, when every eye will see Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord over all the earth.

**The Feast of Tabernacles**<sup>35</sup> or Sukkot is held five days later, on the fifteenth day of Tishri. It, too, is a seven-day feast. The first day of the feast is a high sabbath. The day following the seventh day (the eighth day) is also a high sabbath. No work can be done on those two days. This feast commemorates the fact that God had Israel live in “booths” or tents during their sojourn in the wilderness. These were temporary dwellings and Israel was commanded to build temporary booths during the Feast of Tabernacles throughout their generations and live in them for seven days each year during this feast. It may also commemorate the birth of Christ in a stable in Bethlehem, although there is no scriptural reference to the date of Christ’s birth. But it was after the birth of Christ that God tabernacled or dwelt among men.

This is also called the **Feast of Ingathering** because it takes place at the final harvest of the year.

This feast may represent the judgment of unbelievers at Christ’s return (the grapes who are crushed)

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<sup>33</sup> Zechariah 12:10 NASB

<sup>34</sup> Rev. 1:7 NLT

<sup>35</sup> Lev. 23:34

or the start of the **Millennial Reign**, when all believers will have been harvested from the earth, gathered into the Lord's barn, the earth will have been threshed and the chaff burned. It is also when God Himself will "tabernacle" with men again and will live among us, ruling and reigning for 1000 years. The seven days may symbolize the entire 7000-year redemption effort and the completion of that effort in the Millennium. The eighth day of the feast, a sabbath of rest, may symbolize the start of the eternal state (following the Millennium), when the new heavens and new earth are created and the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven. In the New Jerusalem there will be no Temple, for the Lord is its Temple. There will be no night because it is illumined by the glory of God. The city will be a light to all the earth. Nothing unclean will enter and there will be a river of living water coming from the throne of God to water the Trees of Life on either side of the river producing twelve kinds of fruit for the healing of the nations. John tells us in John 7:37-38: "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast (the eighth day of the feast of Tabernacles), Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"" This feast then can be said to be fulfilled by the start of the **Millennial Reign** of Christ, the final **Harvest** of the gospel and ultimately the beginning of **Eternity**.

## **FEAST SUMMARY**

The first three feasts were fulfilled by Jesus during His first coming.

The fourth feast was fulfilled with the coming of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the beginning of the Church Age at Pentecost 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. On this feast, the "purchased possession" (men released from slavery to sin) is received back from Satan in Jubilee.

The end of the Church Age may come then with the fifth annual feast, the Feast of Trumpets or it may end on Pentecost in the spring, the same feast it started on. Or it could even end on a future First Fruits, or on the makeup First Fruits. Finally, it could end on a random day that no one knows.

The final three feasts are fulfilled during the Second Coming of Christ.

This is an amazing testimony to the truth of the Bible. No one could have concocted this perfect alignment of historical events, commemorative feast days and prophetic events except God Himself. Only God is sovereign over the universe and can bring events to pass on a perfect timetable. No one

could have put the stars in their places and assigned them their circuits but the Creator of heaven and earth. So we look expectantly for the beginning of the fall feast cycle to be fulfilled in our day and for signs in the heavens as prophesied.

### **JEWISH WEDDING CUSTOM**

Another way that we see the story of salvation demonstrated (for the Jewish seeker in particular) is embedded in the Jewish wedding customs. This is a fascinating illustration of God's redemptive program as well. Here's how the Jewish wedding custom works:

When a man finds a maiden he delights in, he must approach her father and ask for her hand in marriage. If he is a suitable candidate, the father asks the daughter if she consents to marry. If she does, the prospective groom must supply "the bride price." This is whatever the girl's father demands.<sup>36</sup> The couple then shares a cup of wine<sup>37</sup> and the betrothal is sealed. From this point on the couple is committed to the future marriage and it takes a divorce to nullify the agreement. Then the groom returns to his father's house for up to two years<sup>38</sup> and builds on an addition for his bride and himself.<sup>39</sup> When the groom's father is satisfied that the bridal chamber is just perfect, he gives the son the go-ahead to procure his bride. The son then gathers his groomsmen and attendants and heads for the bride's home at midnight. In the meantime, the bride has been preparing herself for the wedding.<sup>40</sup> Her white wedding clothes have been prepared.<sup>41</sup> Her skin, hair and nails have been burnished and oiled. She mends relationships, expresses gratitude to her family, and sanctifies her heart for marriage. The bride participates in a ritual bath,<sup>42</sup> a Mikveh, to prepare herself as a spotless bride. Her attendants are on notice, to be ready at any moment, because no one but the father of the groom knows when the wedding day will arrive.

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<sup>36</sup> For example, Laban required Jacob to work for seven years for his daughter, Rachel. Of course, Laban tricked Jacob and gave him Leah, his unattractive elder daughter, and then required Jacob to work an additional seven years for Rachel. In Jesus case, the bride price was His own blood.

<sup>37</sup> Symbolic of Communion, which Christ participated in with his apostles at the Last Supper, before He paid the bride price.

<sup>38</sup> Symbolized by the Ascension and the intervening two millennia.

<sup>39</sup> "I go to prepare a place for you."

<sup>40</sup> Symbolic of sanctification.

<sup>41</sup> Symbolic of the righteous acts of the saints.

<sup>42</sup> Symbolic of baptism.

Once that day comes, the father announces to the son that the chamber<sup>43</sup> is ready. The groom leaves his father's house at midnight with his entourage and heads into the street, with his groomsmen ahead of him shouting, "The bridegroom cometh! The bridegroom cometh!" and blowing the shofar.<sup>44</sup> When they get within earshot of the bride's home, she and her attendants hear the call of the bridegroom and immediately arise, don their white apparel and head out into the street to meet the groom. Together they return to the father's house, where they consummate the marriage in the bridal chamber for seven days.<sup>45</sup> After the bridal week is completed, the groom brings the bride out of the chamber to the delight of the assembled guests. The happy couple, treated as king and queen, then enjoy a sumptuous feast with their guests.<sup>46</sup>

This portrays for us the plan of God to procure His own bride: Jesus, the Groom, delights in the Bride, the Church. He pays the bride-price, His own blood. Then He returns to His Father's house in heaven (which he did at the Ascension) for up to 2000 years (symbolized by the two years) and prepares a place for her, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). Jesus said to His apostles: "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:1-3)

When the Father determines that the dwelling is ready, He sends the Son to fetch His bride.<sup>47</sup> This is a picture of the Rapture of the Church. We are to "wait for His Son from heaven... who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. 1:10) Then we return to the Father's house (heaven) with the Son, our Groom, where the wedding is consummated. A cup of wine, symbolized by Communion, is shared between the Bride and Groom at the wedding ceremony signifying acceptance of the new covenant of

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<sup>43</sup> Symbolic of the New Jerusalem.

<sup>44</sup> Symbolic of the Rapture.

<sup>45</sup> See Genesis 29:27: "Complete the bridal week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years. And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he (Laban) gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife."

<sup>46</sup> Symbolic of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

<sup>47</sup> Jesus said, "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but Father alone." (Matthew 24:35-37) Jesus with His entourage will "descend from heaven with a shout (possibly "The Bridegroom cometh!"), the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (symbolized by the street), and so we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thess.4:15-17)

marriage. At the Last Supper, “[Jesus] took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’” (Matt. 26:27-29) When the apostles shared this cup with Jesus, it symbolized this marriage covenant.

The wedding is consummated<sup>48</sup> in heaven for seven years, after which the Bride is brought forth from the wedding chamber and presented to the assembled guests, presumably those who will have survived the Tribulation and judgment of the sheep and goat nations on earth,<sup>49</sup> who then celebrate with the Bride and Groom (King and Queen) at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. During that seven years in the bridal chamber, the Tribulation<sup>50</sup> is taking place on the earth, but the Bride is safely ensconced in her Husband’s kingdom, far from the devil’s reach. After the seven years are completed, the Bride will accompany the Groom to the earth as He vanquishes the opposition, refurbishes the earth and establishes a new Eden-like Kingdom where He will rule and reign for 1000 years. Together they will enforce righteousness and peace on a tranquil planet, one many believe will be restored to its Edenic state after near total destruction (at least in the area of the Kingdom boundaries given in Genesis 15<sup>51</sup>). Each man will sit under his own fig tree with none to make them afraid and the wolf and lamb will graze together “in all My holy mountain.”

As you can see, this wedding custom is a portrait of the Rapture and the Wedding Feast prophesied in Scripture. It is one more evidence that this intricate and multilayered plan will unfold just as God has planned. Now is the time for all of us to decide where our loyalty and love lie.

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<sup>48</sup> What that means in literal terms is unknown.

<sup>49</sup> We speculate as to the identity of the assembled guests, who may comprise Old Testament saints who died in fellowship with God, but did not have the indwelling Holy Spirit (or they may actually be part of the Bride), those who treated Jews and Christians with compassion during the Tribulation, those who did not take the mark of the Beast or worship him, and perhaps also the Tribulation saints who are beheaded for their testimony.

<sup>50</sup> The Tribulation is a prophesied seven-year period in which unbelieving Israel and the unbelieving world will suffer God’s judgment for rejecting the only provision for salvation available to them. Satan will also take full control of the world after the Holy Spirit and the Church are removed as there will be nothing to restrain him, making this time doubly tribulational. See Theory #13 for more on this subject.

<sup>51</sup> Why do we make this qualification? Because we are told that God will withhold rain for three years from those kingdoms that do not send representatives to Jerusalem at certain feasts during the Millennial reign. In Eden, a mist used to rise from the ground and water the whole surface of the ground, as no rain had yet fallen (before the Flood). Withholding rain indicates that 1) the entire earth has not yet returned to a full Edenic state, and 2) some nations will experience painful judgments that preclude Edenic conditions during the Millennium.