

## Title: “A Christian’s Feast of Trumpets”

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Leviticus 23:23-25

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**Service Readings:** Leviticus 23:23-25; Genesis 22:1-19; John 19:16-18

*The Feast of Trumpets is a call to remember that God is King of creation. It was the beginning of a 10-day period that called the Israelites to repent and turn back to God. Christians can adopt this practice for their own use as they enter their own period of reflection and repentance during the season of Lent.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Our message this evening comes from the reading in Leviticus, the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter. Starting in the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse:

<sup>23</sup> And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>24</sup> “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. <sup>25</sup> You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD.”

The festival described is called Rosh Hashanah, or Feast of Trumpets, and it is a festival that is celebrated to this very day. Every Fall, Jewish communities around the world participate in it and tonight I’d like to explore what, if anything, it has to offer Christians, today. We don’t celebrate this festival but that doesn’t mean it is not worth understanding, if for no other reason than it was a festival that Jesus participated in and so it is worth at least knowing what it was that he celebrated and in what way it pointed the Israelites to the anticipated arrival of the Messiah.

This festival was the start of a ten day period of time they called “Days of Awe” and on this day the leaders would blow a ram’s horn and the people would present food offerings to the Lord. Tradition says that the horn would blow 100 times that day and that the sound was meant to “jostle the Israelites awake” into remembering that God is their King and that he is the creator of all, including them. And so, as you can imagine, this was a day of remembrance, a day to recall who God is and what he has done.

So you should see, right from the start, that we can find immediate value in this festival, for shouldn’t we also be jostled awake every now and again to reflect on who God is and what he has created? The difference is, of course, that their reflections don’t include Jesus... but I’m getting ahead of myself. For now, let’s just stick to remembering God and his creative power.

Now, I have to mention what happens after this festival so you have a more complete context. As I said already, what followed this day was a period of ten days that were called “Days of Awe” and it was a time of self-reflection - a time when each person would examine his life, repent, and turn

back whole-heartedly to God. Then, at the end of *this* period was a festival called Yom Kippur where the community would make atonement for their sins and hope that God would forgive them.

When we view these events in connection with each other we can see a theme that, in many ways, mimics life – even our own lives. We turn from God; The Holy Spirit prompts us to repent. We repent and turn back to him. He forgives us. We then live in this forgiveness until we sin and initiate the cycle all over again. So on one level we can relate to the motive of these festivals, but is there anything more, anything deeper that we can find? And even more specifically, earlier we “set aside” Jesus; can we bring him back into this conversation? We certainly can find a richer connection between the festival and the rhythm of our lives just as we can, and should, reintroduce Jesus back into this discussion.

Now, the main reason that we don’t celebrate Rosh Hashanah with the Jewish community is because we are no longer waiting for the Messiah; we recognize that he has already entered into his creation and has saved his people. In fact, we are celebrating that right now in this period we call Lent. Tonight is Ash Wednesday and it is a time where we can also reflect on God as our Lord and creator. We are reminded that we were created from the dust of the earth and that we return there as we wait for the resurrection of our own bodies and the life that is to come. The Israelites understand, and believed the same thing; and it was surely part of their celebration. They looked back to the book of Genesis and read this creation account in the same way that we read it today. There was no doubt about how we were created and there was no doubt about who created us. The difference between them and us, then, is not that we view the *past* differently. The difference is that we view the *future* differently. Next week I’ll talk more about the Yom Kippur, the festival after the ten Days of Awe, but for now, it was a day when the community would look to the future and hope that they had atoned for all of their sins and that God had truly forgiven them. They would speak about their names being written in one of two books and they would never be fully confident which book they would find their names in. For us, we don’t share that uncertainty because we believe in Jesus and his work on the cross. We place all of our faith and hope in him and so can live in confidence that we will have everlasting life with God. We have no need to worry or be anxious about our final destination. And this is the difference that makes *all* the difference!

So as they celebrated Rosh Hashanah, they entered into a time of uncertainty. It was a time where they would count all their sins, make all their sacrifices, and hope that at the end of the day they had appeased God. They saw God as a judge and punisher of sins. And so with *this* worldview as their lens through which they read the creation account, returning to dust after death may have invited anxiety instead of peace.

But for us, because we live with the certainty of Christ, we find peace in the knowledge that our bodies may go back into the ground while we wait for his return, but they won’t stay there forever. At some point they will be raised to the heavens to be reunited with our souls and will be restored to new life. And so, for us, as we enter into Lent, we enter a time of certainty, not uncertainty. We enter a time when we don’t try to appease God but reflect on the one who *did* appease him. We reflect on our own sins and failures but *not* with the hope that our names are written into the right book. Instead, we reflect on our sins because we *know* that because of Jesus we have salvation. We reflect on our sins because we live in awe for what he has done for us.

And so, as you continue with your day, you can remember Rosh Hashanah and recall our God of creation. But recall, also, our God of salvation – our God who entered into this world as man and offered us a certainty that the rest of the world still seeks.

Please pray with me.

God of creation

There at the start

Before the beginning of time

With no point of reference

You spoke to the dark

And fleshed out the wonder of light

God of salvation

You have given your most precious son for our salvation

Through him you have created a way back to you

And you have traveled that path to bring us back

You are the God of our creation and the God of our salvation.

Amen.