

The Feasts of YHWH

We humans love feasts. They help us to internalize things deeply so that they become a tangible experience for us. Above all, *God* knows this, which is why He Himself has entrusted certain orders to His people from the beginning:

*“The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are **my appointed festivals**, the **appointed festivals of the Lord**, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.” (Lev 23:1f. NIV)*

In addition to the *regular, weekly day of rest, the “Shabbat”*, in the following He introduces the 7 feasts or literally “appointed times”, in everyday language “dates”, which, *according to HIM*, are not specifically “*Jewish festivals*”, but “*His own*”!

Several times He repeats: “*This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.*” (Lev 23:14 NIV; cf. verses 21,31,41)

Is this now really, *as many say*, all “*old covenant*”, “*long since fulfilled*” and “*no longer relevant for us today*”? Or is it *so much more* and God really *means* what He said from the beginning?

But if these are really *eternal ordinances of our God*, then why have *we as the church of Jesus* ever moved away from them?

The answer to this important question is simply found in history:

Historic turning away

In the early church there was still a very close connection to *Israel* as God's chosen people and it was just as natural for the followers of *Yeshua* to heed these *days, which were sanctified by God*.

In Acts 27:9 KJV, for example, *Luke* refers to the autumnal day of atonement “*Yom Kippur*” (cf. Lev 23: 27-31), on which people traditionally fast, in a very natural way when he writes:

“when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them...”

But already in early church history a very tragic, deeply hateful detachment of the *increasingly Gentile church* took place from everything that had to do with *Israel* and *Judaism*.

At this time the so-called **replacement theology** arose, which, *completely incorrectly and unbiblically*, states that God would have permanently rejected *Israel* and replaced it with the church.

That the *negative things* and curses that are pronounced in the Bible about Israel would continue to apply *literally* to the Jews, but the *positive things* and promises of salvation for Israel, however, would from now on only be understood *figuratively* and apply exclusively to the church.

While the *originally vivid movement of the followers of Yeshua* became more and more a *state church* characterized by secular hierarchy, power and control, which had distanced itself from God in many ways, also the *hatred of Israel* increased more and more.

It got to the point that in 325, at the Council of Nicaea, even Jewish Christian bishops, that means believing Jews, were *completely excluded* for the first time. (Thus, ironically, Jesus, His disciples and apostles, too, would not have had access any longer!) Hereby it is quite shocking that there were only 300 years between the foundation of the Church of Christ as a virtually *purely Jewish movement* and the point that Jews were completely excluded from its leadership!

It was at the same council where the “church” also detached itself from *God's appointed festivals* and established its own, such as *Easter* instead of *Passover* or the *Festival of Firstfruits*.

Emperor Constantine, who was leading in all of this, wrote in this regard: “*It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom [the calculation] of the Jews. (...) We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, (...) we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews.*” (Quoted from the letter of Emperor Constantine, found in Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib. III 18-20)

Instead of the *God-given day of rest, the Shabbat*, Sunday was designated as the “day of the Lord”. In the following time occasionally even *death penalty* was enacted for keeping the Sabbath, one of the 10 commandments of God!

All this was a *deeply sinful turning away from God Himself and many of His ordinances*, of which frighteningly hardly any repentance and reversal has taken place in the church until today!

Just like *the Jews in Jesus' time* (cf. Mk 7:7f.), *we equally* still hold on firmly to these *purely man-made traditions*, while we partly completely ignore God's commandments. We let ourselves be seduced by the power of tradition, from which we do not want to detach.

To this day, the majority of us prefer to celebrate Christmas and *Easter*, a festival that is even named directly after a pagan goddess (the spring goddess *Eostre* or *Astarte*), than to turn back to the times that God consciously and prophetically has set, as we will see further below.

However, all of this is not just about *festivals per se*, but *much more deeply* also about *our true identity as the church of Jesus*, which is deeply connected and inseparably linked to *His people Israel*, the noble olive tree into which we are grafted! (Cf. Rom 11) - *Historically, presently*, but above all also *concerning the coming age* when Jesus will return and take up His rule on earth. (Cf. Rev 20:6, 5:10, Dan 7:18)

Promised restoration

But not least *because of this*, God is in the process of restoring things that had been buried over many centuries.

Yeshua promised for the time immediately before His return:

*“Elias truly shall first come, and **restore all things.**”* (Mt 17:11 KJV)

Correspondingly, Peter announced that the Messiah would remain in heaven *“until the times of **restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken **by the mouth of all his holy prophets** since the world began.”* (Acts 3:21 KJV)

So we see that *what the prophets have revealed long ago* is by no means *finished*, but points straight to the *coming, messianic time of Yeshua's (thousand year) reign on earth.*

Another passage says of this time:

“The Lord will be king over the whole earth. (...)

*Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the **Festival of Tabernacles.**”* (Sach 14: 9.16 NIV)

Thus, *even with regard to the festivals* we see that a wonderful restoration will take place worldwide in the coming age, when *all peoples* will pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the autumnal *Feast of Tabernacles* (Lev 23: 33ff.) and worship the true king there.

Yet, *already now* God is beginning to emphasize these *His feasts* in a completely new way in the worldwide body of Christ and to restore them in a way *according to the New Covenant.*

This is by no means about *mere legalism, that we do a religious act according to the letter*, but about what these eternal ordinances of God ultimately point to!

Just as Paul writes that we should “*let no man therefore judge*” us because of any feast days, which are above all “***a shadow of things to come***; but the body [or real fulfillment] is of Christ.” (Col 2:16f. KJV)

Prophetic fulfillment of the feast days

And indeed, *from the very beginning* all of these festivals point to **the most important key events in God's plan of salvation!**

- The *spring festivals* to Yeshua's **first coming**, and the *autumn festivals* to His **second coming!**

The biblical year explicitly begins *in spring* with the month of Nisan. (Cf. Ex 12:2; Est 3:7)

(And, *by the way*, **not**, as in *Jewish tradition, which sadly has likewise moved away from God's Word*, in autumn with the “*only so-called*” *New Year's festival “Rosh HaShana”!*)

Thereupon the *four spring festivals* follow.

But the prophetic meaning of the festivals is *not only general*, but Jesus so far fulfilled them all even **exactly on the respective days!!!**

Exactly on **Passover**, even at the exact hour when the lambs were to be slaughtered in the temple, He sacrificed Himself on the cross as the perfect Passover lamb! (Cf. 1Cor 5:7)

Exactly on the **Festival of Firstfruits**, three days later, He was “*raised from the dead*” as “*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*” (1 Cor 15:20 NIV, cf. Acts 26:23)

Exactly on the feast of **Shavuot** (Pentecost), which is a *first, small harvest festival*, He sent the Holy Spirit “*and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*” (Acts 2:41 KJV)

The four spring festivals are followed by a long *summer break*, which indicates *the current time between His first and second coming*, before the autumn festivals come, which *also from an agricultural point of view* end up the harvest cycle.

But if Jesus has fulfilled the *first four spring feasts on exactly those days*, we can expect that He will also do the same with the *remaining three autumn feasts!*

The significance of the Autumn Festivals

The **Feast of Trumpets, Yom Terua**, on which God orders “a memorial of blowing of trumpets” (Lev 23:24 KJV), primarily points to the upcoming event of Yeshua's return!

Who promises: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days (...) shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels **with a great sound of a trumpet**, and they shall gather together his elect...” (Mt 24: 29-31 KJV)

Paul confirms in the same context: “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound**, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor 15:52 KJV)

The holy and awesome dimension of this *day of judgment and appearance of Jesus in glory*, when He will return after two “millennial days”, is already foreshadowed in the appearance of God at Sinai, where it says: “On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and **a very loud trumpet blast**. Everyone in the camp trembled. (...) Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain trembled violently. As **the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder**, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.” (Ex 19: 16-19 NIV)

One very important dimension of the symbolic meaning of the shofar horn is, as it is also revealed at the end of the Bible, **the voice or speaking of God**.

(Cf. Rev 1: 10 KJV: “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me **a great voice, as of a trumpet**”; Rev 4:1 KJV: “and the first voice which I heard was **as it were of a trumpet talking with me**; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”)

A second, related, eschatological dimension of it is the reference to the *time of the 7 trumpets* from Revelation 8, that means a prophetic announcement of the coming time of tribulation for the world, which will be profoundly shaken and changed in the course of it.

(Cf. Rev 10:11 NIV: “Then I was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.”)

But especially for the church this day is already now a reminder to listen to the call of God, Who is currently calling us for example out of “Babylon”, the system of the world, where self-centeredness, pride, serving mammon, fornication and the like reign, unto Him and His rest. Also in view of the coming shakings and the ultimate fall of this worldwide system.

Just like His call to the sleeping virgins to wake up because the King is coming!

The Feast of Trumpets, Jom Terua, ultimately points to the confrontation with *God's truth* and ultimately *Jesus personally*, since “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” and “every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom 14, 10-12 NIV) It heralds a (10-day) period of self-examination, penitence and repentance until the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, with the aim of coming clean with God anew.

Ultimately, this will be fulfilled on a large scale when Jesus returns and the whole world, *but also His people*, will be confronted with Him *as He really is*. At this point it all results in the **Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur**, which follows 10 days later: The only time in the entire year on which the high priest once entered the Holy of Holies to obtain atonement for the sins of the entire people.

So this day also indicates that *his people as a whole, not just individually*, will come to terms and be completely reconciled with Him.

- The full number of the believers from the nations who are “grafted in” **and** the natural descendants of Israel who will be saved on a grand scale will come in complete humility, obedience, love and unity with God and with one another!

(Cf. Rom 11:26 NIV: “and in this way all Israel will be saved.

As it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob.”

Jer 31:33f. NIV: “This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will **all** know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Eze 36: 25-27 NIV: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”)

The final **Feast of Tabernacles, Sukkot**, is a huge festival of joy (cf. Lev 23: 40 NIV: “you are to (...) rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.”) and a final, great harvest festival (cf. Ex 23:16), where we will probably thank and praise God forever for the last great harvest from all nations, which will yet come in fully in the last days!

It is especially also a festival for the nations who are promised to pilgrimage in flocks to Jerusalem for this purpose. (Cf. Zech 14: 16ff.) Since it is one of the three “pilgrimage festivals”, just like Passover and Shavuot, of which it is commanded:

“Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign Lord, the God of Israel.” (Ex 34:23 NIV)

It has therefore a special relation to Jerusalem. Which is why it has particular importance to be there at this certain time, similarly like it was already in the past on Passover, when Yeshua was crucified there, and on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell on the crowd there.

(Cf. Acts 1: 4)

... How fascinating it is that long before Jerusalem even existed as a city, God already spoke in His foreknowledge: “Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither [to there] shall ye bring all that I command you;” (Deut 12: 11 KJV)

Furthermore, Sukkot indicates above all the great, joyful

“Wedding Feast of the Lamb”. (Cf. Rev 19: 7 NIV:

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”)

If you will, we as the Bride of Christ therewith already have a “wedding date” with our King and Bridegroom Yeshua, even if we do not yet know which year it will be.

While the feast *originally* served as a reminder of the *wandering in the desert* (cf. Lev 23: 42f.: “*Live in temporary shelters for seven days (...) so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt.*”), accordingly, in *eternity* we will instead rather remember *our entire present time on earth*, where *we are likewise* still on a journey, have no permanent dwelling “*but we are looking for the city that is to come.*” (Heb 13:14^{NIV}) Where we are - *then, but also already now again and again* - to gratefully remember the precious purification, guidance, patience, kindness, faithfulness and provision that God has always given us in sufficient measure despite all resistance and trials.

The *eighth day of rest* (cf. Lev 23:39), following “*the last day, that great day of the feast*” (Jn 7:37^{KJV}), symbolizes *a new beginning* and ultimately *the recreation of everything* after 6 + 1 “days”, that is 6000 years of *past biblical history* + 1000 years of the *upcoming messianic kingdom of peace*, which will be *like a Sabbath* for the whole earth. (Cf. 2Pet 3:8; Rev 20 + 21)

Résumé

In all of this we see the *richness and prophetic depth* that God has given from the beginning in these **eternal orders**.

In which *everything is contained* that we are *ever* to remember, related to *both the already fulfilled* great deeds of God/Jesus as well as those which are *still to come*.

Where *everything is already included*, so that we *never had to add anything to* and most of all *should never have taken away anything from* what God has given *all along* in His perfect foresight.

And which He is therefore *now* finally about to restore again in an appropriate manner, while the *complete fulfillment, especially also that of the awe-inspiring autumn festivals*, is near.