

Bite Size Bible Study

Fall Holy Days #215

By Pastor Lee

It's been a couple years since I've talked about the fall holy days. It's interesting to note that it is not necessary for the Christian to keep these days because they were given to the Hebrews as part of their culture. But it does seem useful to look at these days and see what they were to mean to the Jewish people and try to take from it some of the things that we could use for our own relationship with God. I believe that there is a great deal in these festivals that helps us in our understanding of Jesus and His walk on this earth.

Rosh Hashanah or Feast of Trumpets

Rosh Hashanah is the first day of the month of Tishrei. It's considered the head of the civil year. This year Rosh Hashanah will begin on the evening of October 2, 2024, using our current calendar.

All these days, throughout the month are a further opportunity to connect with God, to be inspired, and to become more fulfilled and bring us closer in tune with our inner selves and our creator.

The first ten days is often called The Days of Awe (*Yamin Noraim*) or Days of Repentance. Beginning with *Rosh HaShanah* it includes 10 days of introspection and repentance leading to the final day called *Yom Kippur*. This is a time of soul searching and of making things right with God and one's neighbors.

For the Israelite and the Christian, it reminds us to judge our words and our deeds by God's standards and not our own. It calls us to quit following our old error filled ways and failures, and to look ahead with fresh hope and determination to a brighter future. The observance of this day is to fill us with eagerness to embrace the life God has given us and to respect it. It is a time to reflect on the fact that we were created in God's own image and to do the best we can to honor that image.

Yom Kippur

Yom Kippur will begin on the evening of October 9, 2024. It is a day filled with images of love. God will 1) care for us, 2) gather us up, 3) listen to us, 4) love us.

The overarching theme of Yom Kippur is repentance. During the holiday all thoughts are supposed to be centered on this theme. The day revolves around the theme of communal and individual repentance for sins committed during the past year, in order that both the community and the individual may be inscribed in the Book of Life for the coming year.

Yom Kippur ultimately is about two lessons, one of eternity and one of fidelity. The lesson of death is clear, but we are to live as if we will live forever. Yom Kippur seeks to make our own death real to us, so that we will "use each moment wisely." If we can believe – not just intellectually but in our gut– that we will die, but that

through Jesus we will live again, perhaps then to *really live*.

But now, quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear — although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well — and it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise. By God's grace, without earning it, all are granted the status of being considered righteous before him, through the act redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Yeshua. God put Yeshua forward as the kapparah (atonement) for sin through his faithfulness in respect to his bloody sacrificial death. This vindicated God's righteousness; because, in his forbearance, he had passed over [with neither punishment nor remission] the sins people had committed in the past; and it vindicates his righteousness in the present age by showing that he is righteous himself and is also the one who makes people righteous on the ground of Yeshua's faithfulness.
Rom 3:21-26 CJB

Our righteousness, whether Jew or Gentile, comes from Jesus' righteousness, which was proven by his faithful life here on earth. He set the example. He didn't just consider His words and actions on one day of the year, but daily, minute by minute. If we can follow His example we will make Yom Kippur a way of life, not one day each year, but every minute of our lives.

Can we live and can we love? Can we become *shalom* (whole) and have *shalom* (peace)? Yom Kippur asks those questions because these are the questions that measure each soul (life). God's love is our hope; to feel it is our task.

Sukkot

Sukkot will begin on the evening of October 14, 2024. It is also known by several other names – Feast of Booths, Festival of Ingathering, or Feast of Tabernacles. It is celebrated on the 15th day of the month of Tishri and lasts for seven days.

Sukkot is quite a drastic transition, from Yom Kippur, (one of the most solemn holidays in the year) to one of the most joyous. Sukkot is so unreservedly joyful that it is commonly referred to in Jewish prayer and literature as the Season of Rejoicing.

"But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the produce of the land, you are to observe the festival of Adonai seven days; the first day is to be a complete rest and the eighth day is to be a

complete rest. On the first day you are to take choice fruit, palm fronds, thick branches and river-willows, and celebrate in the presence of Adonai your God for seven days. You are to observe it as a feast to Adonai seven days in the year; it is a permanent regulation, generation after generation; keep it in the seventh month. You are to live in sukkot for seven days; every citizen of Isra'el is to live in a sukkah, so that generation after generation of you will know that I made the people of Isra'el live in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am Adonai your God." Lev 23:39-43 CJB

In honor of the holiday's historical significance, the command is to dwell in temporary shelters (*sukkot*), as Israel's ancestors did in the wilderness. The command to "dwell" in a sukkah can be fulfilled by simply eating all of one's meals there; however, if the weather, climate, and one's health permit, one should spend as much time in the sukkah as possible, including sleeping in it.

Sukkot represents a time of renewed fellowship with Adonai. Since Yom Kipper has just finished when one has admitted their sins, made restitution as best as possible and been forgiven, it represents the renewal of our relationship with God. As such it is right and fitting that this festival is joyous and full of expectancy of an exceptional future in the Kingdom of God.

It is a time to concentrate on God's nature of Love for all His children. Jesus' life, death and resurrection has made possible our deliverance from sin. His Good News is for all people of all time periods. Historically only the Hebrew people celebrated the Sukkot period but, in the future, it will be for all nations, tribes, and peoples.

Prophetically this festival portrays Jesus coming a second time to complete the Kingdom of God. It will be a time when all that has become disorganized and confused due to Adam and the rest of mankind not being able to fulfill their original purpose of ruling and being responsible for the world and its inhabitants will be corrected. It will be a time when everything will be completely functional again.

Shemini Atzeret

Shemini Atzeret will begin on the evening of October 21, 2024. This is the 22nd day of Tishri. The two days following the festival of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret (Eighth Day of Assembly) and Simchat Torah, (Rejoicing in Torah) are separate holidays but are related to Sukkot and are commonly thought of as part of Sukkot.

Shemini Atzeret literally meaning "the assembly of the eighth (day)." Rabbinic literature explains the holiday as: Our Creator is like a host, who has invited us as visitors for a limited time, but now when the time comes for us to

leave, He has enjoyed himself so much that He asks us to stay another day.

Simchat Torah

Simchat Torah will begin on the evening of October 22, 2024, and means "Rejoicing in the Torah." This holiday marks the completion of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings. Each week in synagogue a few chapters from the Torah are read, starting with Genesis 1 and working through to Deuteronomy 34.

Simchat Torah is not mentioned in the Torah or Talmud. It has become a day on which the Jewish people celebrate and express their love of the Torah (God's teaching) and the never-ending cycle of reading and studying it.

The day is characterized by joyful dancing with the Torah Scrolls. Everyone in the congregation is invited to dance and sing with the Torah scrolls, and the scene is extremely festive and joyful. The final portion of Deuteronomy is read in the synagogue followed by the beginning of the Book of Genesis. In this manner, the annual cycle of Torah readings continues unbroken.

Simchat Torah conveys a clear message about the centrality of Torah in Jewish life. It is both a source of Jewish identity and a precious gift from God. Simchat Torah is the day on which the whole community gathers to come into direct contact with the Torah and to express the joy in having received it.

Simchat Torah is a festive and joyful celebration of the Jewish people's love of and commitment to Torah.

For the Christian and Messianic Jew these days represent the Love of the Scriptures given to us. They represent the instructions God has given for a fruitful life and a strong bond between the individual and God, as well as giving us a glimpse of the character of the God that we place our faith and trust in.

Israel kept these days as a remembrance, but the images and truths they represent are there for everyone. Celebrating the bond between God and us is not a once in a year event however but should be remembered and acted upon daily.

We are saved by Jesus' death and resurrection but our initial usefulness in the future times of God's Kingdom will depend on what we are trained and qualified to do. This physical life that we have now is our opportunity to gear up to a future we only see dimly for now. God's standards and Jesus' example, as well as our communication with the Holy Spirit, will ensure our success.