

# The Feast of Trumpets

## The Prelude to the Feast

An interesting *prelude* to the Feast of Trumpets is recorded in **Leviticus 23.22**: *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.* This verse covers a period of almost four months (*Sivan*, third month to *Tishri*, seventh month) whilst the harvest was being gathered in. As the previous feast of Pentecost was fulfilled in the commencement of the church, we have the present dispensation of grace pictured in the reaping of the harvest. The great harvest of the church has almost come to an end and yet the gleanings remain for the poor and the stranger. This reminds us that many will be saved after the rapture, during the tribulation – both the poor (Jew, e.g. Naomi) and stranger (Gentile, e.g. Ruth). In fact, the tribulation will be a period of great evangelism, led by 144,000 zealous Jews (Revelation 7.1-8). The resultant harvest of souls, of **all nations**, and *people* and *tongues* is seen in Revelation 7.9-17.

The phrase 'I am the LORD your God' is most important. It only occurs twice in Leviticus 23 (vv.22, 43) and divides the feasts into two sections comprising the first four and final three. As we have seen, the first four feasts are fulfilled in the *first coming* of the **Lord Jesus** (including His subsequent death, resurrection and ascension) and the **church**. The remaining three feasts are *yet to be fulfilled* in the *second coming* of the **Lord Jesus** to the earth and the nation of **Israel**. Thus the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled when Israel is **called** or *regathered*; the Day of Atonement = Israel **covered** or *repentant*; the Feast of Tabernacles = Israel **comforted** or *rejoicing*.

## The Particulars of the Feast

The Feast of Trumpets occurred on the **first** day of the *seventh* month (Leviticus 23.24). This was the first day of the *civil* new year (cf. Exodus 12.2) and the day of the *new moon*. On this day there was a *memorial of blowing of trumpets* (v.24). Undoubtedly the blowing of trumpets on this day would have reminded the people of the awe-inspiring events of the giving of the law at Sinai. **Exodus 19.18**: *Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. 19 And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.* However, the word 'memorial' does not primarily refer to the remembering of something that is *past*, but rather a reminding of something that is *present* or just at hand. For **Israel**, the blowing of the trumpets was therefore a call to contrition and penitence in the light of the soon coming Day of Atonement (nine days hence). It was also a memorial for **God** (see Numbers 10.9 and cf. Exodus 28.12), to call to His mind the covenant people to whom He had made so many gracious promises. **William Kelly**: *It is God calling to mind what had once been before Him, but long dead and gone. What can this be? It is the recall of His ancient people on the earth. The Jew is again brought into remembrance before God. And so, whilst national and earthly Israel is at present set aside, they will again be brought into remembrance before God following the rapture of the church (Romans 11).*

What were the trumpets that were blown? There are **two** major types of trumpet in the OT. There was the **shofar** (Joshua 6), a curved ram's horn, and the **chatsotsrah** (Numbers 10), two silver trumpets, which, according to Josephus, were straight, approximately 45cm in length and flared at one end. The silver trumpets were connected with the *striking* or sounding of *notes* and the shofar with *shouting*. In Leviticus 23.24 there is no word in the original Hebrew for 'trumpet'. Rather, the text literally reads 'in the day of the blast' or 'the day of the shout'. The shofar is therefore in view as confirmed by **Psalm 81.3**: *Blow up the shofar in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.* The shofar gave an awe-inspiring sound that is first found in Scripture in connection with the Divine presence on Sinai (Exodus 19.16). It was an instrument used to *awaken* (Isaiah 58.1), *alarm* (Joel 2.1) and *assemble* (Isaiah 27.13) the people.



### The Promise of the Feast (Its Fulfilment)

As this feast is in the seventh month (Tishri), it signals the *completion* of God's dealings with His people Israel. The fact that this was the day of the new moon is suggestive of a new beginning for the nation of Israel. The first day of the seventh month is significant elsewhere in Scripture in relation to Israel. Ezra 3.6 records that this was the day the Babylonian exiles re-gathered in Jerusalem to worship at the restored altar (note also the calling back of the exiles to the word of God, Nehemiah 8.2-8).

When exactly will this feast be **fulfilled** and the nation of Israel called back to their land in penitence and contrition? Some say the feast is being fulfilled today as more than **six** million Jews (from a world population of approximately 14 million) currently reside in Israel, something unthinkable before 1948 and the re-establishment of an Israeli state. The feast is not, however, being fulfilled today. Israel is presently gathering in unbelief, and Scripture states that they will be dispersed once again during the great tribulation (Matthew 24.15-22). It is of great interest to trace the various occasions on which the shofar will be sounded in coming days:

- To announce the coming tribulation. **Joel 2.1:** *Blow ye the **shofar** in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: For the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.*
- To announce the coming Christ. **Zechariah 9.9:** *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee... **14** the Lord GOD will sound the **shofar** and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. **16** On that day the LORD their God will save them...*
- To re-gather the nation of Israel (the fulfilment of the feast). **Isaiah 27.12:** *In that day from the river Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt the LORD will thresh out the grain, and you will be gleaned one by one, O people of Israel. **13** And in that day a **great trumpet (shofar)** will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem. ESV*
- Matthew 24 confirms the same event as that in Isaiah 27. **Matthew 24.31:** *He (the Son of Man) will use a loud trumpet (**shofar**) to send his angels all around the earth, and they will gather his chosen (**elect**) people from every part of the world.*
- **Ezekiel 36.24:** *For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land (FEAST OF TRUMPETS). **25** Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you (DAY OF ATONEMENT). **31** Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*

Thus, the feast of trumpets shall be fulfilled at some point after the visible return of the Son of Man to the earth and before the setting up and manifestation of the millennial kingdom. Given the fulfilment of previous feasts to the day, it is likely the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled on the first day of the seventh month.

The primary interpretation of this feast is in relation to the nation of Israel, however it is possible to make a tentative *application* to the church. We are awaiting a trumpet call; the *trump of God* (1 Thessalonians 4) or the *last trump* (1 Corinthians 15). This trumpet is not the last in a series as others are yet to sound (cf. Revelation 8), but it will signal the closing of the day of grace and conclude the church age.

### The Peal of the Silver Trumpets

Also sounded on the day of the new moon were the silver trumpets (see Numbers 10.10). These trumpets represent the *word of God* and provide a clear, practical **peal** to believers today. For example, they were made of one piece (**unity**) of **silver** (likely from the atonement money) which is a clear type of the Word of God. **Psalm 12.6:** *The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.* The fact that there were two trumpets remind us of the complete **testimony** of the Old and New Testaments.

These trumpets were sounded for various reasons, but note the following. There is the call to:

- **Gather** (Numbers 10.3). As the trumpets called Israel to *assemble* unto Moses at the door of the tabernacle, so the word of God calls us to gather simply to the name of Christ alone.
- **Go** (Numbers 10.5). The trumpets called the camps to **go forward** on their wilderness journeying in an orderly manner. The word of God exhorts us today to **go out** with the word of God (note 1 Thessalonians 1.8) and herald the gospel to all. It also calls us to **go on** in spiritual progress (see Colossians 1.28).
- **Gladness** (Numbers 10.10). The priests were to sound a note of thanksgiving and praise in connection with their *feast days* and *sacrifices*. Let us never forget to daily sound a note of thanksgiving in relation to who Christ is and what He has done (Colossians 4.2).