

God's Reasons for Reminders and Remembrances

We are quickly approaching the 20th anniversary of America's war against terrorists, embedded in Afghanistan. The focus initially was on finding and eliminating the radical, fundamentalist leader of the Al Qaeda network, Osama bin Laden, the militant mastermind of the 9/11 attack on America in the fall of 2001.

This anniversary will again be a sad reminder of the thousands who died in the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, as well as at the Pentagon, and the hijacking and crash of United Airlines Flight 93 into the farm fields of rural Pennsylvania on that fateful, fall morning. Those attacks on American shores propelled us into "America's Longest War," at a debt to U.S. taxpayers of over \$1 trillion. I say "debt" because we didn't and don't have that money. We had to borrow it.

Just days prior to our forces' politically determined pullout, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives on August 26th at the Abbey Gate of the Hamid Karsi International Airport in Kabul. Thirteen young U.S. military members gave, as President Lincoln once said, "the last full measure of devotion." Their deaths were the last of 2,400 Americans sacrificed "over there, so we didn't have to fight them over here," during the two decades.

Reminders

Sadly, we are reminded that these last casualties, apparently only in their twenties, would have had no real remembrance of our country not being at war in Afghanistan. I happened to think about this in connection with the two generations of Israelites during their forty-year trek in the wilderness of

the Middle East, after fleeing cruel slavery in Egypt. The first generation had been delivered from God's plagues on Egypt and yet eventually rebelled against Moses, their deliverer, and the God he served. Their children would take their place and go into the Promised Land.

Encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai, the fleeing children of Israel received the guidebook of Leviticus to teach them about holy living and worship. There, they were introduced to remembrance feasts, holy days and the Year of Jubilee. These appointed feasts (found in Lev. 23-25) were to be reminders of God's goodness and promised blessings.

Rosh Hashanah

Of the seven feasts or "appointed days," three are celebrated in the fall of each year and the first is the Feast of Trumpets. In Hebrew, it is known as Yom Teruah and in modern Judaism, it is called Rosh Hashanah, which literally means "Head of the Year" or "New Year." Its two-day observance is calculated by a lunar calendar and stipulated in Scripture as beginning on the first day of the seventh Hebrew month, known as Tishri. This year (2021), the remembrance will be celebrated from sundown on Monday, September 6th until sundown on the 8th.

"Speak to the children of Israel, saying: In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath, a memorial with the blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation" (Lev. 23:24).

They were to blow shofars at this "Feast of Trumpets," as a memorial or reminder. But we are not told what they are to remember. A clue can be found in their earlier experience at Sinai, as recounted in the book of Exodus.

"Now Mount Sinai was completely covered in smoke because the Lord had descended upon it in fire, and the smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook

violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice" (Exod. 19:18-19).

This sound of loud trumpet blasts in Scripture is a reference to the future, glorious reign of the kingdom of God. At Sinai, the sound of a celestial trumpet grew louder and louder as the Lord Himself descended on the mountain in all His glory, for all the children of Israel to see from a distance (Exod. 19:16-20).

Likewise, this heavenly shofar will be heard as our Lord Jesus descends from heaven at the time of the rapture of the living believers and the resurrection of the dead saints. Our Creator God will be dramatically presented to His creation with a shout, the voice of the archangel and a heavenly trumpet call.

"We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess. 4:15-16).

Each annual Feast of Trumpets is kind of a "dress rehearsal" for that future time of disclosure and departure, as Christ publically returns for His own (Matt. 24:29-31) and receives both living and "sleeping" believers. We are later told that even unbelievers will "see Him, even they who pierced Him" (Rev. 1:7).

In two of Paul's epistles, he also spoke of this future heavenly shofar. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-53, he called it the "last trump" and identified it as blasting just before the rapture of the church, when the dead in Christ are raised with incorruptible bodies and the living believers are transformed into spiritual bodies suitable for heaven.

As shown in 1 Thessalonians 4, immediately after describing the "trumpet call of God" (v. 16), he declared that the dead

and living saints will be “caught up together ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ... and we shall be forever with the Lord” (v. 17). In chapter five, he talks about the Day of the Lord, a short season where His wrath is finally dispensed on the ungodly who are still living on the earth. He explains that believers are “sons of light and sons of the day” (5:4) and will be delivered from this time of judgment.

“For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we should live together with Him. So comfort yourselves together and edify one another, just as you are doing” (1 Thess. 5: 9-11).

End-Times Advice

So, we can summarize these passages of Scripture to say the Feast of Trumpets, the first of the three fall feasts, depicts the coming of the Jewish Messiah and our Savior to rapture the church (made up of Jew and Gentile) immediately prior to the outpouring of God’s wrath on the rebellious ungodly during the Day of the Lord.

The apostle Peter offers this practical advice, in the context of these prophetic insights:

“Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these things, be diligent that you may be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:14). {eoa}

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