

GROWING IN GOD PODCAST



GIG266 – Should Christians Celebrate The Jewish Feasts?

In this podcast, I want to answer a question that I receive from people many times, and that is: Should Christians celebrate or observe the Jewish Biblical feasts, fasts, and holidays? There are several appointed times in the Hebrew Scriptures, and people wonder, is this something that is past, or is there a significance or a reason why Christians should be observing or looking for God to move in their lives during these times? And so, I am excited to talk about this. What I would like to do is just give a very simple overview of these times, and also read the Scriptures that pertain to them.

Now there are many Scriptures that pertain to the times of the feasts and fasts of Israel and the Jewish people, the biblical feasts; and I want to limit what I am reading, not to cover everything about them, but to try to answer this question: Is this something for Christian believers to engage in? So that will be the focus of these Scriptures. As you are reading along, you may be saying, “Well, there is also this Scripture, and that Scripture.” I know, there are many, many Scriptures, and hopefully we will have a later podcast in which we get into specific teaching about these individual events, feasts, fasts, and holiday celebrations. But for this purpose, I just want to provide an overview of what these times are, and to give Scriptures that will show us whether or not this is something for our observation.

We find many things in the Hebrew calendar that are wonderful times, and they are reflective of things which were given by God in the Hebrew Scriptures, throughout the Tanakh, the Bible, that should be celebrated, should be observed, should be performed by His people. And so, what I want to do is follow the calendar schedule and talk about the main names of these events, or fasts, or celebrations, and what they are observing in the Hebrew calendar system. I will start with Purim. The Feast of Purim is a joyous time. You find it in the book of Esther. This is one of the greatest times to be in Israel, by the way, to celebrate the Feast of Purim. Everyone is in costumes, and everyone is rejoicing and dancing in the streets. It is a great celebration with great joy, because it is remembering the deliverance of the Jewish people from the proclamation of annihilation that was given under Haman. And when we think about how significant this time is that we are remembering, we see that if it were not for this deliverance, there would be no Jews today – that is how serious this was. It was a proclamation for absolute annihilation of the Jewish people; and we know that satan's purpose in every generation has been to annihilate the Jews. We see that continuing today, and therefore it is a celebration for us today that we can celebrate – not only was he unable to destroy the Jewish people back in the book of Esther, but he is also going to fail in his intent to do that today.

The next feast that we have is Pesach, or as we say in English, Passover. This, of course, is marking the deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt after four hundred years of slavery; again, a wonderful celebration. We next have Shavuot, or Pentecost, which is celebrated by the Jewish people as the giving of the Law in the Torah at Mount Sinai. There are other celebrations that we find for this one; as far as the Church, this is the time in which the Church was established. It was on the Feast of Pentecost that the doors to the Church were opened up, and so this is definitely one that we, as Christians, should be celebrating. Next, we have Tisha B'Av. This is not proclaimed in the Scriptures; there is no chapter or verse to tell us to celebrate this, but it is very significant of scriptural events. This is a fast. It is a deep

time of fasting and mourning, because it is remembering the destruction of both the First and Second Temples of the Jewish people. There are other events in history that were very difficult for the Jewish people, and they are also remembered at this time; but the main thing is that the First and Second Temple were destroyed at this time of Tisha B'Av. And so, we find ourselves mourning and praying and crying out to God, looking for Him to move and see restoration of that which has been destroyed.

Next we see Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is also termed Yom Teruah in the Scripture. It is called the Day of Shofar, it is the Day of Trumpets. We mostly hear of it in English as the Day of Trumpets and the Time of Trumpets. It is a time of remembrance. Obviously, the trumpets were to call the people together, to remind them of events. It is also a time of judgment, looking forward to seeing the day of judgment of God in the earth. Today the Jews celebrate Rosh Hashanah as the Jewish new year. It is the first day of the calendar year, but it also goes immediately into what we call the Days of Awe. Many times we refer to the Days of Awe as the Ten Days of Repentance. This is a time of repentance and introspection. So, between the Day of Trumpets and the day of Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, we have these Days of Awe that are a time of repentance and preparing ourselves for the atonement that God is going to bring. And as we remember about the Day of Atonement, it was the one day of the year that the high priest would enter into the Holy of Holies and make atonement for himself, for the people, for the Temple itself. These are very, very amazing times. These are the high holy days of the Jewish people, and they are of tremendous importance to them, and to us also, because we believe so much in that atoning work that God brings for us.

Next we have the feast of Sukkot, or the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths, referred to in the Scriptures as Sukkot or Booths. In English we mostly talk about this as being the Feast of Tabernacles. Again, this is one of the feasts that are prescribed in the Scriptures to be celebrated. It is a time when we remember Israel being in the wilderness for forty years. I know that can be thought of as a difficult time, as a negative time, but it also is the time when His Presence was with them day and night. He provided them with food, and many things happened that need to be remembered and celebrated of God taking care of His people and bringing them in to possess the land of Canaan.

Next we have Hanukkah. This is, again, not prescribed by the Scriptures to be celebrated, but we see it celebrated in the Scriptures. We see it celebrated by Jesus, or Yeshua, in the New Testament. So, this is something that we need to look at closely, and ask ourselves that question: Should we be finding the significance in celebrating these times that are open doors for the Jewish people? And I do believe that they are open doors for us. The Hanukkah celebration is also called the Festival of Lights. It commemorates the victory of the Jewish people in 165 BCE over the Seleucids, when they were able to retake the Temple Mount and retake the Temple, and rededicate the Temple itself; and it is this idea of rededication that is celebrated at Hanukkah. In the Scriptures, it is called the Feast of Dedication. So we see this time being celebrated, a wonderful time of joy. I know many Christians think about Hanukkah and they go, "Oh, well, this is the time that the Jews are having a celebration in December, trying to mimic Christmas." That is not at all what it is, and it was instituted way before Christmas was, so sorry, that one does not work. But it is still a fun time, and a great time of celebration that can be enjoyed by all.

Now what I want to do is look at some of the Scriptures. Again, I am not looking at all the Scriptures about these times; I am not even looking necessarily at the place in Scripture where it is prescribed to keep these times. Instead, what I am looking at is this: Are there Scriptures that show the significance to Jesus, Yeshua, to Christian believers, and therefore, are they things that you should consider and pray

over and look to the Lord about? Are these times that you should be a part of, and that your family should celebrate and have as special times in their life and celebration? I am going to go through these rather quickly, without giving a lot of commentary on them. I will start at Luke the second chapter, at verses 40-42. It says, "The Child continued to grow," this is speaking of Yeshua, of Jesus. "The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast." They took Him with them, and we can see from this that Jesus's family were observant Jews. They followed the pattern that during the specified Feast, the whole family went up to Jerusalem and engaged in the celebration of the Feast. When Yeshua became of age, He was taken with the family up to Jerusalem also, to be a part of these times of celebration.

In John 2:13, it says, "The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." John 2:23, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing." So we see that when Christ was in the time of His ministry, He Himself went up to the Feast during these times. You can read through the Gospels and recognize that this was His pattern, to go to Jerusalem during the prescribed feasts.

In John 5:1, it says, "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." John 7, starting at verse 2 going through verse 10, says,

Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near [remember, this is the Feast of Tabernacles]. Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." For not even His brothers were believing in Him. So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

We know that at this point Christ was being very careful about where He went, because they sought to kill Him. They were driven to kill Him. We think about His suffering at the cross, but we have to remember that through His entire life ministry they were seeking to kill Him, and stone Him, and do away with Him; and He was very careful about where He went and about letting people know where He was going. So He told His brothers to go on up, yet He followed them, because this was a prescribed time. This to me does have a significance to it, that even though it was dangerous for Yeshua to go into Jerusalem and go through Judea at this time, He still went up at this prescribed time of the feast.

John 10:22-23 says, "At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon." Now as I have said, the Feast of Dedication is Hanukkah; so we see that Christ was in Jerusalem, in the Temple, at the celebration of Hanukkah.

Acts 20:16 talks about Paul: "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost." Paul was scheduling his time around being in Jerusalem to celebrate the time of the feast. Very clear.

First Corinthians 5:7-8: "Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not

with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” In these verses, what we normally are taught is about the taking of Communion; this is usually read in a teaching in preparation for Communion. But we have to read what it is really saying. I am not taking away from any celebration or any emphasis on the Communion that is found in these verses; but what I am saying is that he is very clear to say, “Therefore let us celebrate the feast.” So he is referring to receiving the bread and how we take the bread and how we engage in the Lord's Supper, but he is also saying, “Let us celebrate the feast” – it was not limited. In fact, it is speaking specifically of the Communion, then it is also referring to how we take it during our celebration of the Feast of Passover. So this is very specific from Paul.

First Corinthians 16:7-9. “For I do not wish to see you now just in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” Again we see Paul, as with Jesus, had many adversaries in his life. They were constantly seeking to kill him, and he was very careful about where he was and what he was doing. But once again, in these verses he is planning his schedule around the fact that he wants to be in Ephesus to be with the saints in the celebration of this great Feast of Pentecost, which again, is when the Church had its nexus.

Acts 2:1-4,

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

So here we have it. The Day of Pentecost comes; the disciples, the believers, the one hundred twenty that were there, awaiting this event. Christ had told them, “Go back to Jerusalem and wait until you are endued with power from on high.” And that endowment of the Spirit, that giving of authority and power to the disciples to spread the Gospel into all the world, came on the Day of Pentecost. The Church, as we recall, was begun at Pentecost. So even today we should recognize with great anticipation as we come to these times that God has prescribed, these appointed times named by God, called out in the Scriptures; we should approach these times with tremendous anticipation in our hearts. It is not just to recognize them or celebrate them – “Yes, here we go again, it's time for the feast of this, or the fast of that.” No, these are times when we should come with anticipation in our hearts: “God is going to meet us. God is going to open doors that have never been open for us. We are going to have experiences and revelation. God is going to show us things in His Word that we have never yet seen.” So again, to me it is without question that we should be celebrating with anticipation, with joy; and when there are times of fasting, with great mourning before the Lord, crying out in our repentance to Him.

I want to read from the Hebrew Scriptures Zechariah 14:16-19, because here we have a prophetic voice saying that the feasts will be celebrated by the Gentiles.

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths [or the Feast of Tabernacles]. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of

Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths [or the Feast of Tabernacles].

What an amazing prophecy! It is talking about the nations that historically have come against Israel and come against the Jewish people. And yet it is pointing to a day, the days of Messiah, the days of His Kingdom on this earth, in which all of the nations will come up to Jerusalem, come to Israel, to celebrate the tremendous Feast of Tabernacles together. And it is not exactly a choice of whether you want to do that or not; there is a plague and a punishment if the nations or the families of the earth do not come. That, to me, is how serious God is about these times that He has appointed for us to celebrate Him, and celebrate His Word, and celebrate what He has opened the door for us to experience in Him. So all of the nations, as it says in Micah 4:1-2, “all the nations will stream to Zion to be taught of the Lord.” And this is going to be mainly during these days of feasts, fasts, and festivals that the Scriptures have called for us to do. These are eternal events that will be celebrated through history.

I really want you to take away from this podcast a time of prayer and looking to the Lord – is this something that we should do? Should I get a Jewish calendar? Should I do searches through the Scriptures and find out more about these events? Hopefully, I will be able to do some more podcasting about the specific and individual feasts, so that you can have more of an idea of what they are about and what to expect during these times. But we can see that Christ's family celebrated them as observant Jews back at the Second Temple period. Paul himself celebrated these times; he scheduled his trips and his travels around the times of the feasts to be where he should be during specific feasts. We see that the Church was born during the Feast of Pentecost – how much more of an encouragement do we need than to see that this is a special called-out time for us as believers in the Lord, in Christ, in Yeshua, in Jesus? These are times for us to celebrate. And then, the greatest one that we had at the end: The prophecies point to the fact that through history, the nations will come, the Gentile nations will all come up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles – and I believe, the other feasts and celebrations of fasting before the Lord also.

I want to end this with a prayer, because we are entering in to the time of these Fall festivals and feasts, and I want to believe the Lord to meet us in them.

Lord, we approach these times. And as we do, we want to realize that these are Your appointed times, and we want to keep these appointments with You that You have established for us. Let us schedule our hearts and schedule our spirits to enter in to a celebration, enter in to times of mourning, of fasting, with You, as You have declared. Let us search out the Scriptures and Your Word to see what You have for us. But as we go into these specific feasts of the Fall season, we ask that You pour out Your gracious forgiveness upon us. We ask that You restore to us the joy of Your salvation, and that You allow us to enter in to Your Kingdom Presence.

Amen.