

# Sukkot 2017 and Beyond: Keep Watch!

By T.W. Tramm

THE SEVEN-DAY festival of Sukkot, or “Tabernacles,” begins the evening of October 6 this year.

In contrast to the somber tone that characterizes Yom Kippur, Sukkot is a joyous festival that celebrates the final ingathering of all the produce of the land. In ancient Israel, the granaries, threshing floors, wine and olive presses would be full to capacity at this time, and families would be putting the finishing touches on a *sukkah*, a temporary shelter, or hut, the Lord instructed them to inhabit during the festival (Lev. 23:42, 43).

Because Sukkot is one of the three major harvest festivals, some consider it a high watch time for the Rapture.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, all of God’s appointed times warrant a heightened state of watchfulness. Having seen so many high-watch dates come and go this year, however, it’s more important than ever to be mindful of Jesus’ words in Mathew:

*“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect”* (Matt. 24:42-44).

According to Matthew, not only do we not know the hour, Jesus is coming at an hour *we do not expect*. Some interpret this passage to mean that if we knew the feast on which the Lord was returning we would watch on that day and not be surprised. But this interpretation belies the “thief” analogy, the point of which is that break-ins do not occur only on certain days. The lesson, therefore, is that we must be ready *every day*.

Mark uses a different analogy to teach the same thing:

*“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. ‘Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!’”* (Mark 13:33-37).

Here, Jesus’ return is likened to a homeowner who has gone away for a time and left his servants in charge of the house. The servant at the door is cautioned to “keep watch” because the owner can return at any time: “at evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.” Again, some would

suggest this refers to not knowing the *exact hour* of Jesus' return during a feast, but common sense and also Matthew's "thief" analogy tells us the Lord is speaking of a larger timeframe.

A common teaching, today, is that Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians implies we will know the feast day of Jesus' return:

*"Now, brothers and sisters, about times and seasons we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober" (1 Thess. 5: 1-6).*

The word translated "seasons" in this passage refers to the Lord's appointed times, leading some to conclude that Paul sees no need to write about "times and seasons" because it's understood Jesus is returning on a feast day. But the real reason for Paul's silence regarding times and seasons is revealed in verse 2: the Thessalonians are aware that the Lord is coming like a *thief*, on a day no one can anticipate.

It's important to note that nothing in Paul's letter precludes our knowing the season, or general timeframe, of Jesus' return. In fact, the Apostle drops a significant hint in this regard when he says: *"While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman..." (v. 3).*

In addition to Paul's "peace-and-safety" clue, Scripture is replete with signs and indicators to help us discern the season. For instance, the Lord links His coming to the generation who sees the rebirth of Israel and the restoration of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:32-34; Dan. 9:25). He says there will be wars, earthquakes, famines, and signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars (Luke 21).

We are seeing all of these things today.

We have witnessed the Jews' prophetic return to the Land in 1948 and the restoration of Jerusalem in 1967. The headlines report, daily, bizarre weather, social and political division, and threats of war. In recent weeks we've seen unprecedented hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and volcanic activity. We've witnessed provocative missile launchings from North Korea and the worst mass shooting in US history. The stock market continues its bizarre and inexplicable winning streak, despite troublesome indicators and predictions that a major crash is imminent. In fact, September 2017 is being called "the least volatile September *ever* for stocks," causing one to wonder if we're witnessing the ultimate calm before the storm in the financial arena. We have seen a remarkable and unparalleled convergence of signs in the heavens: solar and lunar eclipses on key biblical calendar days; the reappearance of the Bethlehem Star; extraordinary astronomical alignments; and a marked increase in near earth asteroid and meteor pass-bys, including one that's slated to skim the planet on October 12, the final day of Sukkot.<sup>2</sup>

Last but not least, all signs point to us being in a jubilee year. While the Jewish civil calendar has the years beginning in the fall, the Bible is clear that God reckons years from the spring, in Nisan (Ex. 12:1-).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, based on a spring 1967 *terminus a quo*, the current Jubilee began in March 2017 and will end in March 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Some have suggested that, because the Rapture didn't occur on Tishrei 1 (Trumpets), we cannot be in a Jubilee or that the Jubilee must be another year, such as 2024. Regarding the timing of the Rapture relative to the feasts, it's important to understand that other plausible scenarios exist. For example, some propose that all of the fall feasts will be fulfilled in a single season at the Second Coming, and the Rapture, typified by the Pentecost/Church-Age harvest on the 50<sup>th</sup> day (a type of jubilee), will occur at an appointed time only the Father knows (Acts 1:7). Regarding the Jubilee being another year, any theory would have to rely on assumptions about the year of an historical Jubilee and the correct reckoning of the cycle, of which there is little consensus. What's more, it's difficult to imagine a more compelling confirmation of a Jubilee than jubilee-themed events occurring at a 50-year interval (1917 + 1967 = 2017), especially in light of Daniel's prophecy, which states: "*From the issuing of the decree to return to and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince will be seven weeks [one jubilee cycle]...*" (9:25).

Some have proposed that the Jubilee pertains not to the rapture of the Church but to Israel's redemption at the Second Coming. The Apostle to the *Gentiles*, however, links the year of redemption to the Church by using jubilee terminology in the passages addressing our deliverance from mortal bondage at the Rapture (Rom. 8:19-23; Eph. 1:13, 14). Also, Isaiah 63 pictures the Lord executing judgment *after* the year of redemption has come, indicating that the Jubilee precedes the Tribulation rather than follows it (v. 4). Furthermore, the fundamental themes of Jubilee point to the end of the Church Age: The Jubilee is when captives are released and land goes back to its original owner (Lev. 25). This is what occurs at the Rapture—the dead and living in Christ are liberated from the bondage of corruption and the land goes back to God, who begins to execute judgment.

The bottom line is that both the signs and calendar point to Jesus' return being imminent!

As we await the sound of the "last trump," there is nothing inherently unbiblical about contemplating timeframes, as long as we are responsible and do not set dates. It seems more and more apparent, however, that the Lord wants us to trust less in our calendars and calculations and more, simply, in Him. The calendar, despite centuries of alterations and misinterpretations, has served its purpose by pointing us to the general season. And now, as the clock ticks off the final few moments of the age, we have to trust that the Creator has the details such as the day figured out. While the catching away of the bride could occur around the Feast of Sukkot this year, a time relatively few would anticipate, it could also happen on a day *no one* is expecting.

So keep watch!

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## NOTES:

### 1. Reasons Sukkot is considered a potential time for the Rapture:

- There are three harvest festivals (Ex. 23:14-17; 2 Chron. 8:13). The Church age began on the harvest festival of Pentecost, thus some believe it may end on the next in order harvest festival, Sukkot.
- Trumpets are sounded at every feast (Num. 10:10; Ps. 81:3, 4), and the final festival of the biblical year is Sukkot, thus some suggest the “last trump” may relate to Sukkot.
- Jesus’ transfiguration, which could be seen as a picture of our transformation at the Rapture, is believed to have occurred during Sukkot (Matt. 17:4).
- In Revelation, a great multitude is pictured in heaven, after the Rapture, holding palm branches in their hands (Rev. 7:9, 10). One of the Levitical rituals of Sukkot is to rejoice before the Lord with palm branches (Lev. 23:39, 40).
- Sukkot is a seven-day festival, thus “no man knows the day.”

### 2. Article: [Close encounter: asteroid the size of a house set for near miss with Earth](#)

### 3. Article: When Does the Biblical Year Begin?

[http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/WHEN\\_DOES\\_THE\\_BIBLICAL\\_YEAR\\_BEGIN\\_-\\_rev\\_a.pdf](http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/WHEN_DOES_THE_BIBLICAL_YEAR_BEGIN_-_rev_a.pdf)

### 4. Article: Calculating Daniel’s Jubilee

[http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/CALCULATING\\_DANIELS\\_JUBILEE.pdf](http://www.theseasonofreturn.com/CALCULATING_DANIELS_JUBILEE.pdf)