

The Seventh Month: Keep Watch!

By T.W. Tramm

OCTOBER 9-10 marks an important biblical-eschatological milestone: not only will it have been 70 years since Israel became a nation again in 1948, and 49 years, or “seven sevens,” since the rebuilding of Jerusalem began in 1969, it will be the first day of the *seventh* month on the biblical calendar.¹

In Leviticus, God instructs Israel to sound trumpets on the first day of the seventh month as a memorial:

“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD” (Lev. 23:23-25).

Scripture doesn’t specify what the blowing of trumpets is to be a memorial or reminder of. However, when God “remembers” someone in the Bible, it typically involves the turning of His attention toward a particular individual or group at a certain point in time.² The blowing of trumpets at the beginning of the seventh month, therefore, might be seen as a reminder or wakeup call that a turning point, or pivotal time, is at hand.

That the seventh month is a crucial time is underscored by the themes and rituals of the festivals of Yom Kippur and Sukkot.

YOM KIPPUR

Yom Kippur is considered the holiest day of the year in Judaism. It was the one day on which the high priest was allowed to enter into the Temple’s innermost sanctuary called the Holy of Holies where he would perform an extensive series of rituals designed to atone for Israel’s sins (Lev. 16; 23:26-32).

Significantly, the trumpet declaring the Year of Jubilee is sounded on Yom Kippur. In view of the collective themes, i.e. atonement, redemption, and judgment,³ it’s not surprising that references to Yom Kippur show up in key eschatological passages. For instance, in Revelation 8, seven angels are given trumpets to announce judgment upon the earth. Before the first trumpet is sounded, another angel is seen standing before the altar, performing the Yom-Kippur ritual of filling a golden censer with incense (vv. 3, 4). When the censer is filled, the angel lights it afire and casts it down to earth, initiating God’s judgment (v.5).

SUKKOT

Five days after Yom Kippur, the seven-day festival of Sukkot begins. Sukkot is pivotal as it celebrates the final ingathering of the year's crops and is one of the three main harvest festivals during which every Israelite male was required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-17). In Scripture a harvest and a gathering before the Lord denote a resurrection (Rev. 7:9-14; 14:15; 1 Cor. 15:20; 2 Thess. 2:1).

References to Sukkot appear in Revelation as well. In chapter 7, just before the angels begin to sound the trumpets of judgment, a great multitude of saints from every nation, people, and tongue is seen standing before God's throne in heaven, rejoicing with palm branches in their hands (Rev. 7:9, 10). One of the main rituals of Sukkot is to rejoice before the Lord with palm branches (Lev. 23:39, 40).

Needless to say, the festivals of the seventh month are brimming with eschatological imagery. Because we only see in part, "as through a dark piece of glass," however, it's unwise to make predictions about the timing of events based on our interpretations. One can speculate, but only the Creator of the calendar knows exactly when and how the final festivals will be fulfilled and how, if at all, the Rapture fits in.

Concerning the timing of the end of the age, Scripture says—

- The day has been predetermined (Acts 17:30, 31).
- We will see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25; 1 Thess. 5:1-5).
- No one knows the exact day, so keep watch (Matt. 24:36; 42-44).

Notice that God doesn't give us a date, or specify a festival, but merely points us to a season and instructs us to keep watch. What is the season? As shown in previous articles, a scriptural case can be made for the harvest of the Church occurring as early as spring or as late as autumn. An example of a rapture typology being applicable to this whole timeframe is Song 2 where the phrase "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" appears just before it is said the "winter is passed," denoting early spring. The phrase (rise up) is then repeated just after it is said "the tender [ripe] grapes give a good smell," denoting late summer/autumn (vv. 8, 13). This is not to say the Rapture can only occur between spring and autumn, the Lord can obviously harvest the Church whenever He chooses. It is only to say it would seem logical for the harvest of believers to correspond to the agricultural harvest.

That the end of the harvest season corresponds to the seventh month, the number seven signifying completion, makes it an apt time for a climactic eschatological event to occur. That this year's seventh month coincides with Israel's pivotal 70th and 49th anniversaries, final preparations of a Mideast peace plan, and a host of other prophetic signs and circumstances, makes it an *especially* apt time.

So keep watch!

NOTES:

1. Most Jewish calendars have the seventh month corresponding to September in 2018. Based on the calendar-reckoning view that says the new moon *after* the spring equinox is the first day of the year, however, I believe the seventh biblical month correctly corresponds to October.

Rationale:

Because Earth's 365-day orbit around the Sun determines the year, the natural marker, or starting point, for the yearly orbit is the equinox. Because biblical years begin in the spring (Ex. 12:2), it is the spring, not the autumnal, equinox that determines the start point of the year and subsequent festivals. (Note: 2015's super-rare total solar eclipse occurring on the spring equinox and Nisan 1 seemed purposely to highlight or draw our attention to the relationship between the spring equinox and the biblical New Year.)

When it comes to reckoning the biblical months, it is the Moon, not the Sun, that determines the starting point. Thus the question arises: Does the new moon *nearest*, meaning sometimes before, the equinox represent the first day of the first month, or does the new moon *after* the equinox begin the first month? Deuteronomy 16 supports the latter (post-equinox) scenario when it says to "observe" the month of Nisan. The Hebrew word translated "observe," *shamar* (Strong's 8104), means to "confine," "preserve," "guard," or "keep within bounds," implying the whole first month must occur to the right side of the equinox (Deut. 16:1).

Not only does reckoning Nisan 1 after the equinox harmonize with Scripture, it makes meteorological and agricultural sense. When one reckons the first month *after* the equinox, the year always begins in the spring. Conversely, when one reckons Nisan 1 the new moon *nearest*, before or after, the equinox, some years begin in the winter and others begin in the spring. Not only is it illogical to begin some years in winter and others in spring, a year begun in the winter sometimes results in the barley not being ripe enough for the Firstfruits festival. When the first month is reckoned *after* the equinox, however, the grain is always ripe enough in time for Firstfruits.

The following factors do *not* determine the biblical New Year and/or festival times:

- The ripened state of the barley is not to be used to determine the New Year as there are too many variables that make this method unreliable. Most importantly, there is no mention of using vegetation to reckon months and years in Genesis, only the lights in the heavens (Gen. 1:14).

- The Sun's position relative to the constellations on the day of the equinox is not a constant/reliable method of reckoning the New Year because this relationship changes over time due to the precession phenomenon.
- The *autumnal* equinox in September does *not* factor into the determination of the New Year because biblical years begin in the *spring* (Ex. 12). Moreover, Scripture only implies that the first month be guarded or kept within bounds relative to the equinox, not the seventh month (Deut. 16:1).

Empirical Support:

The after-the-equinox reckoning of Nisan 1 is validated by the prophetic lunar tetrad of 1967. In 1967 the new moon *nearest* the equinox was March 13. A March 13 Nisan 1 puts Passover at March 27, 1967, a month *before* the "Passover blood moon" that year. Reckoning Nisan 1 the new moon after the equinox, however, puts Nisan 1 on April 13 and Passover on April 24, coinciding with the total lunar eclipse. Thus, assuming the blood-moon signs of 1967 occurred on God's true feast days, the *after*-the-equinox reckoning is validated.

2. The Hebrew word translated "memorial," *zikkaron*, refers to a remembrance or reminder (Strong's 2146). The idea of being remembered by God is seen throughout Scripture. In Genesis 8:1, after Noah and the animals had been floating in the ark for 150 days, the Lord remembers them and causes a wind to pass over the earth and the waters to recede. Likewise, in Genesis 19:29, when God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah, He remembers Abraham and saves his nephew Lot from the catastrophe that overthrows the cities where he lived. Thus, a remembrance implies the deliberate turning of the Lord's attention toward a particular individual or group at a certain point in time.

3. The redemption granted slaves at the Jubilee (Lev. 25) typifies the bodily redemption of believers at the Rapture (Luke 21:28; Rev. 5:9; Rom. 8:21-23; Eph. 1:13, 14). The Jubilee is also associated with the day of vengeance in Isaiah (61:1, 2; 63:4).