

The “Jewish” Festivals Have Meaning for Us All!

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Seventh-day Adventist Christians have been singularly blessed in their investigations into the relevance of Old Testament teachings to latter-day preparation for our Lord’s return. A vivid case in point may be seen in the Biblical religious festivals observed in the spring and autumn, each of which was typical of a counterpart associated with either Jesus’ first advent (i.e., the spring types) or with His imminent Second Advent (the autumn types).¹

Let us look first at the three spring festivals. Many if not most Christian students of Scripture accept as fact that Jesus literally fulfilled the **Passover** type by Himself *becoming* our Passover: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. 13:18. There is disagreement as to the exact date of Jesus’ death, but Friday, April 27 (Nisan 14), A.D. 31, seems to have fulfilled all specifications adequately.²

Closely connected with the Passover festival was the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, following immediately afterward. Here again, Christ, rising from the dead on Sunday, April 29 (Nisan 16), A.D. 31 (Mt. 28:1; cf. a logical extension of the crucifixion date established in 5BC 252–254), became “the Firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20), a “wave sheaf” or representative sample of all who will comprise the company of resurrected just persons.

The third and final spring festival fell in May or June and was called **Pentecost**; and, as its very name indicates, it occurred fifty days (by inclusive reckoning) after the Sunday on which the wave sheaf was presented. See Lev. 23:10, 11, 15, 16. Sure enough, precisely fifty days after that glorious resurrection known popularly as Easter Sunday, that is, on June 17 (Sivan 6), A.D. 31 (a logical extension of the crucifixion date established in 5BC 252–254; cf. 6BC 134), the stupendous events of the Pentecost of Acts 2 ignited the age of the Christian church.

Not alone did the spring types meet exact fulfillments in the stream of historical time. Ellen G. White reveals that “in like manner the types which relate to the Second Advent must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic service” (GC 399, 400). She proceeds to confirm (p. 400) the fact that the second of the three autumn types, the **Day of Atonement**, was literally fulfilled on Tuesday, October 22 (Tishri 10), A.D. 1844. Many Jews continue to observe this festival annually, popularly called Yom Kippur.

It still remains for us to locate in time the other two autumn-festival types. The **Feast of Trumpets**, or Jewish New Year (also called Rosh Hashanah), actually preceded the Day of Atonement on the Jewish religious calendar, occurring on the first of the month Tishri, while the latter fell on the tenth day.

The precise date of this surpassingly important event, this antitypical Feast of Trumpets, can be determined by applying the year-day method of prophetic time reckoning. Counting back 10 *years* from Tishri 10, A.D. 1844, we arrive at Tishri 1, which fell on October 4, A.D. 1834.³ In the same month of that very year, William Miller began proclaiming on a full-time basis the message of a soon-coming Christ. Miller even began keeping a manuscript record book of his lectures, the first of which was delivered on October 1.⁴

The final autumn festival was the **Feast of Tabernacles**, occurring shortly after the Day of Atonement, and which normally falls during the harvest ingathering season in September or October in Palestine (viz., Tuesday, October 22 in the year 1844). To convene this festival the priests summoned God’s people by blowing upon silver trumpets (Num. 10:2, 10), and the people fashioned leafy booths in which they “tabernacled” with Jehovah.

This festival symbolically constitutes nothing less than the final *ingathering* of God’s people (n.b. that Jesus holds a sickle in His other hand; EW 16), who will also “tabernacle” with Jehovah just as their spiritual ancestors did (Lev. 23:40); and the literal seven-day span (Tishri 15–21) will find its ultimate fulfillment during the feast that begins in the heavenly Canaan, continuing into eternity in the New Earth (the period of seven days being Biblically symbolic of completion in the fullness of time; cf. AA 585).

Indeed, it brings boundless excitement to realize that the antitypical Feast of Tabernacles, or final ingathering of God’s people, will usher in a wonderfully grand celebration in Heaven, and will seamlessly carry over to the New Earth through the ceaseless ages of eternity. Moreover, since this feast apparently begins soon after the arrival of the saints in Heaven, we may surmise that the actual time of the Second Coming may well come in *autumn*—around September or October, depending on the lunar cycle of the year of His return in conjunction with Tishri 1 of that same fateful year. This harks back to Jesus’ sober counsel to “pray ye that your flight be not in *winter*” (Mt. 24:20, emphasis supplied) when fleeing the sword of persecution just prior to His final deliverance.

No wonder God’s people find in the Feast of Tabernacles antitype cause for great rejoicing! “When the ransomed of the Lord have been safely gathered into the heavenly Canaan, forever delivered from the bondage of the curse, . . . they will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (PP 542).

Interestingly, three of these six festivals required all Hebrew men to be present at Jerusalem. These three commemorated the beginning of the barley harvest (Feast of Unleavened Bread) and the wheat harvest (Pentecost) in spring, and the close of the olive and fruit harvest in autumn (Feast of Tabernacles). Literally “fruitful” study may be made of them still.

Let us thank God that the Old Testament continues to shed light on soon-to-come events. Let us also thank Him that the study of Scripture can be, not merely satisfying, but even life-preserving! And finally, let us thank Him that we may *know* with certainty even the exact dates of Jesus’ Second Coming and of our journey through space to the sea of glass—*when God sees fit to reveal them more fully*.⁵

Don’t we serve a wonderful God? Let us often sing His praises.⁶

Endnotes

¹ Cf. William Miller, letter dated May 3, 1843, in *Signs of the Times*, May 17, 1843, p. 85, as cited by LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1982), vol. IV, p. 795.

² Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Commentary*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), vol. 5, pp. 252–254; cf. Ellen G. White, GC 399.

³ Frank Parise, ed., *The Book of Calendars*, 2nd ed. (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2002), p. 38.

⁴ Don F. Neufeld, ed., *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2nd rev. ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996), vol. 11, s.v. “Miller, William,” p. 74; e-mail correspondence June 2, 2008 from James Nix, Director, Ellen G. White Estate, who verified the exact date of Miller’s first lecture. The portion of Miller’s first travel diary giving this date is reproduced in Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944), p. 62.

⁵ The day and hour are announced by God’s Own voice and will be heard by the 144,000. See Ellen Harmon (prior to becoming Mrs. James White), *The Day-Star*, January 24, 1846, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: A Biography* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), vol. 1, p. 57.

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