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Presentation Transcript
The Better Resurrection – Feast of Trumpets
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Here we are gathered once again to observe the Feast of Trumpets. Last year I was listening to the streamed event called *The Return*. They had that on the Sabbath prior to Atonement. The term *the return* was somewhat confusing, because when I first heard about it, I thought they were going to talk about Christ's return. But then I learned that it was about the nation needing to return to God. But at any rate, one of the sponsors of this event was a man named Jonathan Cahn, who is author of *The Harbinger* and some other books about prophecy. He was talking about the days between Trumpets and Atonement. And I thought it good that a Christian – and I think he is Messianic – would talk to the nation about the Feast of Trumpets. Even to mention it is an interesting thing. He made some vague reference to some prophetic meaning.

We, on the other hand – or maybe he thinks the same way we do about it – we see that festival, in the present time, as symbolic of the return of Jesus Christ. We know that, in ancient times, they blew the trumpet every month – the beginning of the month. The Festival of Trumpets falls on the first day of the seventh month. So that would make it the seventh trumpet. And that, of course, has to do with Revelation with the return of Christ. Let's read Revelation 11, starting in verse 15.

Revelation 11:15-18 – *The seventh angel sounded – that would be his trumpet – and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”* That's the prelude to what happens at Atonement where humanity is reconciled back to God. He takes over. He takes control. *And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying, “We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is, and who was, and who is to come, because You have taken your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward your servants the prophets, and the saints, and those who fear your name small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.*

If we keep reading, we see, in chapter 19, that the seventh angel, blowing the seventh prophetic trumpet, is heralding the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. And we can read this scripture and see that the results of Christ's return are, essentially, two major things – those who would destroy the earth are themselves destroyed and the time of the dead has come – that God will reward His servants, the prophets and saints. As we look at this scripture and think about rehearsing the meaning of the day, we can go two ways. But we don't have time to go both of them. So let's look behind door number two today, and let's talk about the time of the dead and the reward of the saints.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, it says – Paul said this:

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 – *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. So, this is to be a very encouraging piece of information that Paul is giving. This holy day is all about one of the great questions of human existence: What happens after death? Well, Paul said – verse 14 – For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. This sounds like Christ is bringing people from heaven with Him, because that's where He's coming from. To believe that you'd have to presume that people are already in heaven. But look in verse 15: For this we say to you by the Word of the Lord – by God's authority, in other words – that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. There are two categories of people that come with Jesus. Those who are asleep and those who are alive when He returns. So that would imply that people are not in heaven – that they're asleep in the grave. Verse 16: For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout – right? Coming down from heaven – with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. The people that consider themselves to be Christians today believe they're already up in heaven, but this is talking about them being dead. The dead in Christ will rise first. So, as Christ is coming down, those who have died and are in Christ will be resurrected up with Him. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Where is Christ going to go, at that point, after this resurrection? Well, He's going to go down to the earth to rule it.*

This is somewhat of a confusion for some people. How's all this going to happen so fast? Well, you have to remember that God is not bound by time, so He resurrects His people from the grave and He changes those who are alive, and they rise up to meet Him in the clouds, and then they come down to fight in the battle of Armageddon. He has all the time He needs to accomplish all of the preparations, and all the readiness, and all the training, and all that. It's all going to be done. So we don't have to worry about that. So he's going to come to the earth to rule it, and He's going to bring with Him the saints who have just been resurrected. That's what it just said right there. Right?

So let's turn our attention to this coming to life of all these people – from Adam until Christ's return – which have been judged and found fit for the resurrection. So we might say that their judgment period was their life that they got to live – however long that was.

Let's look in Revelation 20:6:

Revelation 20:6 – *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.* There's an interesting thing there. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the *first* resurrection. Why? Why would that be more of a blessing than anything else? *Over such, the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.* So, these people lived, and they died, and then they were resurrected. And at this time, they cannot die again – no second death for them. So that means that they are now immortal. They don't have a physical body anymore. They have an immortal spiritual body. Now, people think they go to heaven – they think they get that spiritual body when they go to heaven – and it is a little bit confusing, especially when some people believe in a rapture, where people are just spirited away. Everything is going along as normal and they're spirited away to be with God. And yet, when you understand what was going on on the earth when the resurrection occurred, there was nothing normal about life at that time. It's true – one will be taken and one will be left – but that's because those people that are taken are the ones that are brought up with Christ in the air in the clouds before the battle of Armageddon.

Notice that Jesus tells us that anyone who is in this resurrection is blessed. Maybe you would be just as happy to gain eternal life in any resurrection – first, second, any which way. To be resurrected to immortal life with God would be a great blessing, but to be in the *first* is a surpassing blessing. It's better than... Why would He say that? Why would Jesus say, "Blessed are those in the first resurrection?" Well, they're all in the grave asleep, unaware God is waiting to resurrect them with us. Of course, to them, that's instantaneous. They die and then they come back to life. They don't know how much time has passed – just like when you wake up first thing in the morning, you don't know how many hours you've slept. You just know you went to sleep and you woke up. You have to look at the clock to see. So, to them, it's instantaneous, so there's no sense of separation when they arise to eternal life. Those of us who live on after someone has died in the faith, there's a sense of separation to *us*, because we have to live on. Time passes. We miss them and we have to go on with our lives. But when *they* die, it's instantaneous. They die and they're resurrected. That's what it feels like.

So how is this resurrection a better one? Well, let's look in Revelation 20, verse 6. We just read that, but let's read it again.

Revelation 20:6 – *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection, over such the second death has no power. But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.* So, all those in *this* resurrection will be an eternal child of God for a thousand years before their peers have the opportunity.

So how far ahead will we be by then? How much more will we know? What capabilities will we have? What experience compared to people who are resurrected later? You say, “Well, how do you know later?” Well, because there’s a *first* resurrection and that means has to be another one. We will have an advantage in that way. What will our relationship with God and Christ be like after that long a time? It’s going to be amazing!

Think also about the quality of our calling. In Hebrews 11:35, Paul writes a very poignant passage. He said – talking about people who have lived in Christ and died and who are waiting for the resurrection:

Hebrews 11:35-38 – *Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. So there it is again – a better resurrection. And it doesn’t sound like it’s a picnic to obtain this resurrection. Still others had trials of mockings and scourgings – yes, and of chains and imprisonment. Of course, Paul went through these things himself, didn’t he? So he knows. They were stoned, they were sawn in two – the prophet Isaiah, according to history – not the Bible, but history – was sawn in two. They were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. The world looked down on them, and yet, the world was not worthy of these people. They wandered in the deserts, in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

So, think about what it will be like to be called in the millennium and the white throne judgment – during that thousand-year-period or what the Bible calls the white throne judgment at the end – after the thousand years. Those who find salvation in those times will find it surrounded by the evidence of God’s way as the best way – surrounded by support from God, and Jesus, and from us. Their way will be relatively easy compared to what we have had to face – wandering destitute in sheep skins and goat skins and tormented. We haven’t, in my lifetime, seen too much of that, but I’d say in the last fifteen, twenty years, it started to become apparent to me that even though this has been a Christian nation, Christians can be persecuted here just as well as anywhere else. So, we’ve had it easy so far, and we know that when Christ returns, those who are alive at that time will go through great trials as well. Nevertheless, this is harder, and because it’s harder, the reward is greater.

Think, also, of our relationship with God. In Psalm 18:1 through 14, David said – he was a man who went through some trials:

Psalms 18:1-2 – *I will love you, LORD God, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer – my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my shield, the horn of my salvation – a fitting term for this day, don’t you think – the horn of my salvation? – my stronghold.*

V-6 – *In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried out to my God, and He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears.*

V-14 – *He sent out his arrows and scattered the foe. Lightnings in abundance, He vanquished them.*

He also said, in Psalms 17: 15:

Psalms 17:15 – *As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness. I will be satisfied* – when I go to heaven? No – *when I awake in Your likeness.*

That fits right in with everything we've read so far. David did *not* think he was going to go to heaven. He realized that he was going to die, go into the grave and be resurrected to spirit life, just like Jesus said in Revelation, and be in the likeness of God. All his life – filled with mistakes and pain – David still trusted God, longing for the day when he would be able to with the God he loved face-to-face and be like God, able to connect in a way never before possible.

On what day will that happen to David? On what day will it happen to you? How far ahead of most others will that happen? Well, that's going to happen a thousand years ahead of others. I think about that time when we're all going to be resurrected from all the different eras. We used to all have different languages, wear different clothes. Back then, it was a four-mile-an-hour world – in David's lifetime – and now man has made machines that are hypersonic. But it's going to be a lot of fun for all of us to be resurrected together from all the different eras – righteous Abel – all the way back to the beginning right on through till Christ returns. But then begins a thousand years of all of us – all the saints – people of God who have been faithful to God down through their lives – we're all going to be together with God and with each other for a thousand years, without any difference, without any problems, without any misunderstandings – all one. And that will have happened for a thousand years before the other people are resurrected – the people that didn't know God. That is going to make for a deep eternal connection. And when that resurrection occurs, a vast number of people – like I mentioned, all these other beliefs – are going to understand in a way they've never understood before exactly all the mysteries, all the confusion that people have about God. Watching that thing about *The Return*, Christianity has diversified so much. There are so many different ways and ideas and all of that. That's all going to melt away in oneness in Christ when we're all back together again with Him, because He will explain it all to us. And we will – all of us – at last be on the same page.

I want you to think about this. I work with people of various religions in my counseling practice. A lot of Christian people look down on Mormons – because they have this book and believe that. Some people call them a cult and all that. I've asked Mormons, I've asked Seventh Day Adventists, I've asked our Church of God people, I've asked evangelicals, if, when we're all together at the marriage supper, and Christ says something that doesn't agree with what we agreed with in the past, what will we do with it? Well, we'll all drop it like a hot rock and we'll

with what God says, and we'll learn about what we didn't understand, and then we will. We'll all understand the same thing. That's going to be a great, great time. That's going to happen a thousand years ahead of other people having that. If you come up in the latter resurrection, you're going to miss that moment. You're going to *miss that moment*. That's just one huge thing.

Now, let's ask this: What is the point of our calling? Here we sit, celebrating, contemplating a better resurrection, called of God. What's the point of all that? Why were you called now, ahead of others, and offered a better resurrection? What are you going to do because God has offered you this great blessing? What is the task that's laid before us? There's always something. Right? Well, one scripture that puts it all in perspective for me, and shows how valuable the resurrection is, can be found in Romans 9:1 – starting there – Paul says this. Paul's a very interesting man. He was a Jew – a Levite, actually. I think he may have been a member of the Sanhedrin. He was very well educated – very intelligent. He received a lot of persecution because of that – once he became a Christian – because he was sort of a rock star among the Jews, if I can use that term. And then he threw that all off and became a Christian. So he says:

Romans 9:1 – *I tell you the truth in Christ. I am not lying – my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit – that I have a great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren – my countrymen – according to the flesh, who are Israelite, who pertained to the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, of whom are the fathers, and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.*

Did you get it? Paul said that he would give up his salvation if all his brethren – if all the Jews – could have understanding about Jesus Christ now and be in that first resurrection with him. That's how important it was to him. He said that he would be willing – if there was something he could do to cause them to all understand and be in that first resurrection with us – that he would give up his own life for that. Just think about that. You know, I'm afraid some of us today might say, "Well, ease off, Paul! No big deal. There's another resurrection. They won't lose salvation just because they don't get to come to the party now." Well, if we think like that, we don't get it – if we say, "Ho-hum, there's another resurrection." Paul said, "I became all things to all men that, if by any means, I might save some." "...if by any means, I might save some." He went places to preach to people. And because he went where he went, he was stoned, he was shipwrecked – I think he said three days and nights in the water – beaten, imprisoned, and finally, beheaded by Nero for the first resurrection.

So, let's ask ourselves the question: If Paul was willing to be beaten so that some might be called now, would you be willing to invite someone you know, who is suffering and in need of Christ's forgiveness, over for coffee and a Bible study? He was willing to be stoned, shipwrecked, beaten. And all those people could come up later in another resurrection, but he understood something about that resurrection that a lot of us don't seem to get.

You know, the evangelical people, when I explain to them that I believe in a resurrection from the dead, and then another resurrection for people that haven't understood Christ, they say, "Well, what motivation would you have then to preach the gospel? – which is what they're all about – evangelicals. Right? That's because they don't understand what it means to be in the first resurrection. It's much, much harder to live that kind of life than they're going to have to live in the millennium to understand God's way, but it's much, much, much more valuable as well. I'm not sure that I know all the reasons why the first resurrection – pictured by this day – is such a blessing that the apostle Paul said he'd trade his salvation to see all Israel in it, but I *do* know two things. The resurrection, pictured by this day, is immeasurably better than anything that follows, and that the reason we were all called to be in it is so that we can help others experience it with us. That's why Paul was in shipwreck, why he was beaten, why he was tortured, why he was stoned – because he believed he was *called* in the first resurrection to help others be there too.

So, it's *not* just about us – you know, "Yippee, I've been called to the first resurrection." It's more like, "God called me to the first resurrection so I could help others be there too." What about you? What do you think about that? What are you doing to help others obtain the first resurrection now, instead of just sitting back and saying, "Well, if they don't get it now, they can get it later." Think about it or not, the point is there to be considered, and this – the Feast of Trumpets – the day that pictures the return of Christ – is a good day to consider it.