



True Faith of the
Biblical
Celebrations



Gary Hargrave

After leaving Egypt, Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years and lived in temporary booths or *sukkot*. Once they entered the land, the Israelites were to commemorate God's great deliverance from Egypt, His loving care for them in the wilderness, and His bountiful harvest by celebrating the Feast of the Ingathering as a time of thanksgiving when they gathered in the fruit of their labors from the field (Exodus 23:16). God commanded that His people celebrate this feast and other festivals throughout their generations as permanent ordinances: the three major ones being Passover, Weeks or Pentecost, and Booths, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles. People often ask me why I celebrate these Jewish festivals. Christians especially say, "I thought they were for the Jews and part of the Law, which is now unnecessary in Christ." Hopefully, I will answer that question as well as immerse our hearts into the true faith that is in these biblical statutes and celebrations.



We Celebrate the Holy Convocations by Faith

Why should Christians celebrate these feasts and festivals? One of the best answers is "because they are scriptural." These are holy convocations that God commanded His people to celebrate as perpetual statutes throughout their generations (Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41). It cannot be that we, as Christians, read the Hebrew Scriptures, pick and choose the parts that seem to fit our purposes, and leave out whole sections of Scripture entirely. But Christians tend to do that when it comes to holidays and celebrations. Christianity celebrates holidays that are not found in the Scriptures and were not commanded by God to be celebrated. Instead, those were made by overlaying biblical events, such as the birth and resurrection of Christ, onto pagan holidays. The reason for that was twofold: to separate Christianity from Judaism—which was the biggest mistake Christianity ever made—and to blot out pagan holidays so that people

were not so influenced in their communities by pagan idol worship during those times of the year.

In contrast, we see that celebrations of these appointed times are based on the Scriptures. We need this scriptural foundation so that when we celebrate the feasts, we have something to stand on, to proclaim, and to give voice to in all that God has given us as promises. Everything in the celebration of these feasts has a scriptural basis in a living faith upon which we stand. We can celebrate the feast times that are commanded in the Scriptures because of the Word of God, not in legalism but in faith. That is how the feasts are celebrated by the Jewish people—not out of legalism but by faith—and it is this same faith for the feasts that we can enter into. These are times that the Lord commanded, “Come together and have a holy convocation to Me. Celebrate these times perpetually throughout all your generations” (see Leviticus 23:24–32). And that was not supposed to stop with Christ. Throughout all our generations these statutes will be very much a part of our lives. They will continue on into the Kingdom because the Kingdom will continue throughout all our generations. And when we celebrate these biblical feasts and gatherings, we should understand what we are doing.



The Feasts and Festivals Connect Us to the Jewish People

During the seventh Hebrew month, three holy convocations are celebrated. First is the Day of Trumpets, or in the Hebrew tradition, Rosh Hashanah. It is a time of celebrating and proclaiming the spiritual new year. We also know that the trumpet has scriptural meanings and is a deep spiritual reality. That is why part of our expression of this day should be to proclaim, like the sounding of a trumpet, what will happen in the coming year. We can believe very much in a prophetic expression during this time because it creates and seals the new year. The Day

of Trumpets then begins the Ten Days of Repentance or the Days of Awe, leading into Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. This is a very serious time during which so much of what God is deciding about the year is solidified. Then the third main gathering after the Ten Days of Repentance and Atonement is Sukkot, also called the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths.

I encourage you to study the Scriptures and get a clear biblical understanding about these permanent statutes. You can read about the Day of Trumpets in Leviticus 23:24–25 and Numbers 29:1–6. The Day of Atonement is found in Leviticus 16 and 23:27–32. Then the Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths is described in Leviticus 23:34–44, Numbers 29:12, and Deuteronomy 16:13. Also if you have a Thompson Chain Reference Bible, you can find information in the back under the Hebrew feasts.

I love the celebration of these festivals because it joins us to the Jewish culture without displacing the Jewish people or trying to copy in an exact way their celebrations. We are not Jews, and we are not trying to look like Jews or pretend that we are Jews. We are Christians. But we understand that as Christians, we are grafted into the root of what the Jewish people are. And in the celebration of these feasts and festivals, we are looking to find a rich cultural connection between us and the Jewish people. This is important because the Jews, Israel, and Jerusalem are very meaningful realities for us in our Christian faith. They stand for the Word of God. As we celebrate the holy convocations, although we do not try to duplicate a Jewish celebration, we very much recognize our connection to Israel and the privilege we have of celebrating with the deep meaning that these times have.



Why We Have Faith for These Appointed Times

Part of the significance to us of the Jewish people is that they represent the scriptural history of thousands of years of obedience to a Word from God. But we lose that meaning if we think it is only about obedience. If you think of it as legalism, you are missing it because the foundational expression of the feasts is an expression of faith. We should celebrate the feasts the

same way, as a tremendous time of faith in the Word because without faith it is impossible to please Him or appropriate what we are looking for (Hebrews 11:6).

Millions of Jews all over the world celebrate these holy convocations and what they are doing is a deep release of faith. Part of what the Jewish people represent to me is that the Word of God is true. Because they exist, because there is a nation of Israel, because they stand at the Western Wall expressing their faith in the promises of God, it is our proof that the Word of God is true. They are to us a physical expression of faith (James 2:26). It is this physical reality that we have in the nation of Israel, a people who are the seed of Abraham, who are gathered together for the feasts throughout the earth with one cry together. It says to us as Gentiles that God is true, and every Word that God has spoken is true. It says to us that every Word of God will have its fulfillment, not by us being special in the flesh and not by the Jewish people being special in the flesh, but by our being chosen. When we look at the Jewish people entering in with faith to celebrate the feasts, we know that what God has promised us will be fulfilled.

Some Christians say, “You should not celebrate the feasts because the Jewish people are made obsolete by the New Testament.” If the Jewish people are made obsolete, then we have no faith. If God has broken His promises to the Jewish people, then what God are you trusting—a God who is not faithful to His pledge? If God swore by His own name to Abraham and yet later supposedly cut off the seed of Abraham, I am not sure what we are believing in. However, we can believe in God’s promises because the Jewish people stand today in their synagogues, in their places of worship, and celebrate these tremendous feasts born out of the promise of God that He would bless them and that all the nations of the world will be blessed through them (Genesis 12:2–3, 22:17–18, 26:3–4). It is because they stand and worship that we have faith to stand and worship. So in God’s faithfulness to the Jews, we find the proof that God will be faithful in His promises to us as Gentiles.





Our Faith in God's Plan for His People

This is what Paul expresses in Romans the eleventh chapter. The first verse begins, “God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be!” That should be enough right there to solve this argument in Christianity once and for all: God has not rejected His people, Israel. Regardless of whether you understand the revelation of Christ or understand how the Jewish nation fits into God’s plan, you should be able to stand on the simplicity of this Word. However, some have quoted Paul as the proof that God has rejected the Jews; that there is no longer a natural Israel, only a spiritual Israel to be concerned about; and that Christians have replaced the Jews. Nothing could be further from the truth. In that first verse we have it straight out of Paul’s mouth. And the chapter continues, “There has come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice” (Romans 11:5). God has had a remnant of Israel down through every generation. He always has and always will because it is His promise, and God cannot break His promise (Hebrews 6:17–18).

I wish that Christianity would not be uninformed of this beautiful mystery of God’s plan for His chosen people (Romans 11:25). I do not want us to celebrate the feasts without this awareness of our faith for the nation of Israel. Continuing further, we read in verse 26 of this chapter, “And so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written.” If Paul established the point that Israel is not cut off, then we need to establish our faith for them. We understand that we celebrate these permanent statutes because we are scripturally commanded to do so. We also realize that in celebrating them we are grafted into this tremendous root of Israel that is feeding us the traditions and the strength of faith. But what is it that we are fed and how does it work? We can go to Romans chapter 4 to find out.

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN,
AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED. BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE
LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT.”

ROMANS 4:1–8

Let me tell you what Abraham found. “ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Romans 4:3). By faith, Abraham was reckoned righteous (Genesis 15:6).



God's Promise for Our Righteousness

For Abraham, there was a command from God, but there was also a promise. For us, the Scriptures tell us to celebrate the holy convocations; it is a command. But does that mean it is a law and we must do it as a legalistic obligation? No. We were commanded to do it, but

we also stand in faith to receive the promises given to us. This concept of having the things of God imputed to us is central to these holy days. We do not work our way into God giving us something. We are expecting God to do something but not because of us or our works. We do not say, “God, pay us our due because of what we have done and who we are.” We walk according to the tradition of Abraham, who was not a follower of a certain law. He was not a legalist; he was a man who walked by faith. And in his faith, that which God said was imparted to him (Genesis 12:1–2, 22:17). It was transferred from God to him.

That is what the Day of Atonement is all about. It is about the promise that God will transfer His nature to us. We are not trying to stand in some semblance of righteousness that we have worked up on our own. I come to receive the righteousness that is imputed, that is imparted, that is reckoned to me because I believe Him. And the Jewish people represent the fact that my request will not be denied; because they are the seed of Abraham, the very fulfillment of the promise is that his seed would be a nation like the sands of the sea. The fact that the descendants of Abraham celebrate the feasts is proof to me that the promise is real and has its fulfillment today. So we can come to these appointed times as part of the heritage we were grafted into. The Jews are the proof of the promise having been fulfilled and continuing to be fulfilled. They link us back to Abraham, who did not receive righteousness by works of the flesh, but instead believed God and righteousness was transferred to him by faith.

When was righteousness reckoned to Abraham by faith? While he was circumcised or uncircumcised? Uncircumcised. This separates righteousness completely from the concept that there could be anything legalistic about it. It was a promise based on the guarantee that God cannot lie and that He is (Hebrews 11:6). This promise was appropriated by a man who simply believed it, not while circumcised but while uncircumcised. Then “he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised” (see Romans 4:9–12).



We Walk by Faith with the Jews

The Law was brought later on this same basis of faith. Israel does not walk by law. They do not see their connection as law; they see their beginnings as those who are the children

of Abraham. “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith” (Romans 4:13). The Jews today walk by that same faith. Their love is the Word. Does that mean there is no legalism? There may be some who walk that way, but judging an entire people by a single few is simply a racial point of view. Look at the heart of the people and recognize that they believe in the faith of their father Abraham. They are joined to that same faith, and they walk by that same faith.

For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, “A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU”) in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

ROMANS 4:16–17

Abraham believed “even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.” We are to have the same faith of Abraham, the same faith of the Jewish nation, which calls into existence out of God that which does not yet exist. And there are many things we need to walk in that as yet do not exist. But by faith they will exist. If we, like the Jewish people, are those who approach Him in faith, and if we, like they, are ones who celebrate the appointed times because of our faith, then we should see manifested and imparted to us what does not at this moment exist. For me, that is what these feasts are all about. Even though many of God’s promises do not seem to exist for us now, God is the One, as we approach Him with the faith of Abraham, who brings them into existence.





The Jews Are the Fulfillment of Promise

In hope against hope Abraham believed (Romans 4:18–22). We lay down our striving and say, “Lord, we believe You. We believe that what You promised can be imparted, that it can be imputed to us by Your grace, and it can be called into existence today.” We believe because the Jews all over the world are the fulfillment of the promise, and they are standing in the faith of Abraham, believing that what remains of the promise will be fulfilled. Therefore, we stand in that company. We are grafted into that reality. We are therefore a people of faith, just like Abraham: with respect to the promise of God, we will not waver in unbelief, but grow strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully assured that what He has promised, He is able also to perform (see Romans 4:20–21).

So what are the Jewish people to us? They are the evidence; they are the full assurance that what God promises, He is able to perform. Faith is the substance of the thing hoped for, the evidence of that which does not yet exist (Hebrews 11:1–3). We celebrate the feasts because they are scriptural, because God commanded us to appear before Him three times a year, and because it is a Word to us personally. We stand in faith and graft our hearts into the faith of Abraham, which finds a way to tap into all that God is. Lord, we bless these sacred times to Your people. We bless these holy gatherings to those of us who are grafted into the same faith of Abraham, in the name of the Lord.

All Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible 1995 (NASB1995).

ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel and the lands of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God*, and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

Gary and his family reside in Hawaii.

For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org.

ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish roots of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes our ability to:

- **Feed the poor and break the cycle of poverty in Israel**
- **Support the orphans and widows of fallen Israeli soldiers**
- Provide physical and emotional care to **child victims of terrorism**
- **Build bridges between Christians and Jews with biblical study and research**
- Support archaeology and preservation of the **biblical City of David**
- Provide 24/7 **care for Holocaust survivors**
- **Help persecuted Jews around the world return to Israel and start new lives**
- Plant trees to **reforest Israel** and help create **"The Gospel Trail"** between Nazareth and Capernaum

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