



November 3, 2023

Three Times a Year

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

We're now already a month past the Feast of Tabernacles 2023. It seems like we just left to attend the Feast and then returned home, as time sure seemed to move quickly. All during the Feast this year in Orange Beach, I keep reflecting on and asking myself "just what are the "Feasts of the Lord"?"

Might we talk about that? Why? You might ask. Some have mixed up what scripture reveals. During the Feast of Tabernacles, I was again asked "Why don't you have an offertory message and take up an offering as *commanded* on each of the seven Holy Days?"

The three main times of celebrating these special events are mentioned several times in Scripture.

The first one is Exodus 23:14: "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year." The Hebrew word translated "times" is *regel*. The Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon comments: "a foot (as used in walking); by implication, a step; (feet, paces)"

The Hebrew word translated "feast" is *chagag*. The above Lexicon comments: "properly, to move in a circle, i.e. (specifically) to march in a sacred procession, celebrate, dance."

The interpretation of these words seem to describe the traveling on foot to the place of celebration - Jerusalem. There is a mood of celebration even skipping along at times like doing "a little happy dance".

The next references to the "three times" are Exodus 23:17 and Exodus 34:23. In

these verses the Hebrew word translated "times" is *pa`am*. The above Lexicon comments: "stroke, beat, foot, step, footfall, footstep." This is very similar to *regel*.

The sense is stepping off the distance to the Festival location and the excitement builds as the travelers get closer to their destination!

This may explain why many of us get what we call "Feast fever" as the Feast of Tabernacles draws near. I know after 6 decades of observing the Feasts of the Lord I still become excited in mentally preparing for each one.

Let's look closer at the verse most often referred to: Deuteronomy 16:16-17
"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you."

Not only does God tell us there are three "times" or "seasons", but He also clearly tells us when those times are. At the Feast of UB, Pentecost, and FOT.

The Hebrew word translated "times" is *pa`am* as above. Then the Hebrew word translated "feast" is *chag*. The above Lexicon comments: "festival, feast, festival-gathering, pilgrim-feast."

This implies again that the gathering together by the participants as pilgrims traveling to the Feast celebrations is on foot. The seven annual Sabbaths (or Holy Days) fall *within* these three festival periods.

The celebrations defined in Leviticus 23 are termed "feasts of the LORD" and are described as "holy convocations." The word translated "feasts" in Leviticus 23:2, 4 is *mow'ed* in the singular form. The Lexicon comments about this word: "appointed place, appointed time, meeting." These appointed times are defined in the chapter and they are special Sabbaths which are celebrated with a holy convocation or calling together and gathering of the people.

The Ekklesia (or Church) of God in some fellowships over the decades has made

the administrative decision to take up offerings mentioned in Deuteronomy 16:16 at the time of *each one of these annual Sabbaths and convocations*. That comes out to seven different times. The reasoning is because it is at these times that God's people assemble and appear before Him at these seven convocations that are connected to the three main Feast seasons - spring, summer, and fall. But it is an administrative decision, not a clear instruction from God to do so. Three seasons or times is not the same as 7 Holy Days.

So, yes we had an offering box at the information table where as God commanded offerings could be given by those who wished to do so. But we didn't "pass the basket" each and every Holy Day. And we don't have an offertory message as so common by many.

The Scriptures also compare God's called out people as strangers and pilgrims. (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 1:1; 1 Peter 2:11) As this world continues to change and unfortunately for the worse, you and I no doubt definitely feel like a stranger and pilgrim in the land which we live, and so we should.

The Greek word translated "pilgrim" is *parepidemos*. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon comments on it: "one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives, one sojourning in a strange place, a foreigner."

You and I are citizens of a heavenly country and are passing through this age and society and its system as foreigners. We seek that homeland ruled by the great King who will set up the kingdom of God. We look forward to being part of that kingdom!

As we journeyed to the Feast site we attended this last fall, I hoped we captured the joy the Israelites had as they walked up to the Feast in Jerusalem.

I pray we captured a little foretaste of the circumstances that will be in effect when Christ comes to usher in His kingdom. My wife and I look forward to hearing about your meaningful and joyful celebrations of the feasts of the LORD whatever your circumstances in the weeks and months ahead.

So although a bit late, again, welcome home! Have a blessed upcoming Sabbath as you worship and fellowship with God and one another.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Hoefker

Pastor, CGM

Church of God Ministries (CGM)

(Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios)

tshoefker@cogministries.org / www.cogministries.org

P.O. Box 983, Daphne, AL, 36526-0983 / 251-930-1797 Office