



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
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<https://aulc.us>

Title: **Sacred Celebrations: Then and Now**

Let me start off by saying, “Happy New Year Everybody!” Here we are, once again celebrating another New Year and looking forward to what 2025 has to offer us!,,,

We find ourselves celebrating different things throughout the year, such as New Years Day, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Christmas and more! This is not much different from Jesus’ times, when festivals, weddings and other special events were celebrated.,,,

Special times and events have been the center of our society for a long time now. These are times that we, as a family or community come together and share with each other what is happening in our lives and get caught up on everyone’s lives that we have been missing.,,,

-- Hello, I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.,,,

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!,,,

As we stand at the threshold of a brand-new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on something that’s been part of human life since the very beginning: celebration. From the festivals of ancient Israel to the ways we mark special moments today, celebrations help us pause, reflect, and realign our hearts with God’s purposes. The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us, “*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens*” ,,,(Ecclesiastes 3:1).,,,

Today, we’re going to take a journey through time. We’ll look at the festivals Jesus would have celebrated and compare them to the celebrations we hold dear today. Along the way, we’ll uncover timeless truths that can guide us as we step into this new year together. Amen?

Let's begin with Passover. In Jesus' time, Passover was one of the most significant Jewish festivals. It commemorated the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt—a story we find in Exodus 12.,,, Families would gather to share the Seder meal, retelling the story of how God brought His people out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Can you imagine sitting with Jesus at that table, hearing Him say, “This bread is my body, broken for you” ,(like we see in Luke 22:19)?,, He transformed Passover into a picture of the ultimate deliverance—freedom from sin and death through His sacrifice.,,,

Today, we celebrate Easter, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the ultimate victory! Just as God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, He delivers us from the bondage of sin. Hallelujah!,,

So what does that mean for us this year? It means that no matter what chains you may feel bound by—whether it's fear, doubt, or sin—Jesus has the power to set you free. Will you trust Him for deliverance in 2025?,,

Next, we come to the Feast of Weeks, or Shavuot. In ancient Israel, this festival celebrated two things: the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and the first fruits of the harvest. It was a time of gratitude, a moment to say, “Lord, everything we have comes from You.”,,

Fast forward to the New Testament, and we find another incredible event: Pentecost. Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in power,, (Acts 2:1 to 4). The Church was born, and God's people were equipped to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth.,,,

And what about us?,, Friends, God has given each of us gifts—spiritual gifts, talents, resources—and He calls us to use them for His glory. As we enter this new year, let me ask you: what's your first fruit? What can you dedicate to the Lord in 2025? Let's commit to giving Him our best.,,,

Now, let's talk about the Feast of Tabernacles, or Sukkot. This was a joyful celebration where families built temporary shelters to remember how God provided for the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness,, (Leviticus 23:42 and 43). It was a time to say, “Thank You, Lord, for Your faithfulness.”,,

Today, many of us celebrate Thanksgiving. It's a moment to pause and express gratitude for the blessings in our lives. But church, can I be honest? ,,Sometimes we rush through Thanksgiving—or even forget to give thanks altogether. Yet, the Bible tells us, “*Give thanks in all circumstances*” (First Thessalonians 5:18).,,

So here's the challenge: ,,As we step into this new year, let's cultivate a spirit of gratitude. Start a gratitude journal. Take a moment each day to thank God for His blessings. Gratitude changes everything. Amen?,,

Let's move on to the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur. This was a solemn day of fasting and repentance, a time to seek God's forgiveness and reconcile with Him (Leviticus 16:29-30). It was a day of deep reflection and spiritual renewal.

In our culture, we have New Year's resolutions. We make plans to eat healthier, exercise more, or manage our time better. And while those are good things, church, can I remind you that true renewal begins in the heart?,, David prayed, "*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me*" ,, (Psalm 51:10),,,

So this year, let's start with repentance.,,, What in your life needs to change? What's holding you back from walking fully with God? Let's turn to Him, knowing that His mercies are new every morning. Amen?,,,

Now let's talk about Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. This celebration remembers the rededication of the Temple and the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days. It's a reminder that God provides light in dark times.,,,

For Christians, we celebrate Christmas—the birth of Jesus, the Light of the World ,, (John 8:12). ,,In both Hanukkah and Christmas, we see God's light breaking through the darkness.,,,

And what about today? ,,Church, we live in a world that desperately needs light. Jesus said, "*You are the light of the world*" ,, (Matthew 5:14),,, So as we step into this year, let's shine His light in our families, our workplaces, and our communities. Let's be the hands and feet of Jesus.,,,

Finally, let's talk about the Sabbath. God commanded His people to set aside one day each week for rest and worship ,, (Exodus 20:8 to 10). Jesus Himself said, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*" ,, (Mark 2:27),,,

Church, we live in a world that glorifies busyness. But God calls us to rest. Rest is not a weakness; it's a gift. It's a time to recharge, to reconnect with God, and to remember that He is our provider.,,,

So here's my question:,, Will you make time for rest this year? Will you carve out moments to pause, to worship, and to be still before the Lord? ,,Let's not run on empty. Let's embrace the rhythm God designed for us.,,,

As we reflect on these ancient and modern celebrations, one truth remains: God is the same yesterday, today, and forever,, (Hebrews 13:8),,,. He calls us to remember His faithfulness, to celebrate His provision, and to renew our commitment to Him.,,,

As we begin this New Year, let's carry forward the lessons of these sacred celebrations:,,,

- Remember God's deliverance. ,,
- Dedicate your gifts and talents to His service. ,,
- Give thanks for His provision. ,,
- Seek renewal through repentance. ,,
- Shine His light in the world. ,,
- Rest in His promises. ,,

Church, may this year be filled with joy, purpose, and a deeper intimacy with our Lord. Let's go forward together, celebrating the sacred rhythm of life as God intended.,,,

Amen.,,,

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!,,

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!,,

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

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