

“Our LORD & Ritual Celebrations”

Leviticus 23

February 18, 2018

VIDEO: *“Bring An Awakening”*

INTRO: That song sings the theme of this sermon/text

- Let me ask you a few questions as we begin:
 - When was the last time your heart was arrested with the awakening of celebrating Christ?
 - Do you celebrate Christ & your Christianity?
 - Where? When? Why? & How?

BIG IDEA: *God wants His people to remember WHO, HOW, WHY, & WHEN we are to celebrate*

- WELCOME.... Let’s pray & jump right in?

REVIEW:

- Study of **Hebrews**.... “Hold On” (cf. 1:1-3)
- *“Our LORD & His Law”*
- *“Our LORD & Leviticus”*
- *“Our LORD & Ritual Ceremonies”*

T/S: Today... again, **our goal is to see our LORD & His love...**

PREVIEW: 2 passes... 1st methodically, 2nd *missionally!*

CONTEXT:

- **Leviticus 23** is related to ch.1-7's (5) sacrifices
 - Thank-You (**Burnt**)
 - Please...forgive me (**Guilt**)
 - Thank-You (**Grain**)
 - Please...forgive me (**Sin**)
 - Thank-You for **Peace & Fellowship!**
- Remember: ALL is to RESTORE fellowship...
- Lev. 23 = *one of the Bible's most breath-taking!*

CONTENT:

I. METHODICALLY

Leviticus 23:1-2

*¹ The **LORD spoke** to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are My appointed feasts.*

- **Key words:**
 - "The LORD spoke" = 5X
 - Just like Hebrews 1:1-3

- Just like Leviticus ch.1-7
- “appointed” = 6X
- “**holy convocations**” = 8X
 - 1 weekly...
 - 7 annually

The convocations were called "holy" because they were consecrated to the Lord's service. They were not family or community potlucks with a bit of religion thrown into the mix. They were celebratory remembrances of their God that called for the people to consecrate themselves to the holy task of worshipping the Lord.... Yes, worship was an assignment for God's people to obey, even as it is for us as His Church today...

Hebrews 10:24, 25 exhorts us "to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together."

- “*feast*” = “appointed time”
- “*sacrifice*” = at the heart of every feast!

➤ **7 annual feasts/festivals/celebrations**

- Passover
- Unleavened Bread
- First-Fruits
- Weeks/Pentecost
- Trumpets
- Atonement
- Tabernacles

1. **PASSOVER:** **Salvation**

- Passover is the Feast of Salvation.
 - Saved from slavery & sure death in Egypt...
 - Saved from slavery to sin & death in hell

2. **UNLEAVENED BREAD:** **Deliverance**

- Leaven or yeast in the Bible symbolized sin and evil. Unleavened bread, eaten over a period of time, symbolized a holy walk, as with the Lord.
- Slaves getting ready to leave "at any moment" couldn't wait for dough to rise during baking, so matzoh is made without leaven—which in the Bible is symbolic of sin. Yeshua was sinless.

3. **FIRST-FRUITS:** **Evidence**

- God wanted a special feast during which the Jews would acknowledge the fertility of the fine land He gave them.

T/S: **Next, 50 days after the Festival of Pentecost occurred.**

4. WEEKS/PENTECOST: Harvest

- Marked the summer harvest.
- Here *two "wave loaves" of equal weight* were baked with leaven, representing **sinful man** and called "firstfruits" thereby representing **redeemed or resurrected men**.
- God was predicting that the **Church** would be comprised of two parts, Jew and Gentile.

T/S: See the GAP... Spring to Fall Festivals...

5. TRUMPETS: Transitions

- The **New Year** festival. Today Jewish people refer to the day as **Rosh Hashanah**
- The **trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the Temple**. The high priest actually blew the trumpet so that the faithful would stop harvesting to worship.

6. ATONEMENT: Redemption

- Atonement (**Yom Kippur**). Leviticus 23:27 provides day of confession, highest of holy days.

On the Day of Atonement, the Jew either lived or died.... If the Jew did not strictly follow the law of Leviticus 23:28-30 and Leviticus 23:32, he could be cut off from his people.

The Day of Atonement was unique.

1. First, the sacrifices were for **all** the people,
2. The rituals observed only on **one day** per year.
3. Only the **high priest** performed the rituals
4. Rituals involved being **in the most holy place...**
5. Rituals for the “holy place...”
6. The **scapegoat....** The high priest burned one of the goats on the altar, and the other was kept alive as the “scapegoat” and sent away into the wilderness.

7. TABERNACLES/BOOTHS:

- This is God's celebration of the fact that He provided shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness.

- Each year on Tabernacles, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, devout Jews build little shelters outside their houses, and worship in them.

II. MISSIONALLY

1. PASSOVER: **Salvation (mercy)**
 - a. Jesus was sacrificed on this exact day!!!
 - b. We do not keep the feast in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, since that was a shadow of the greater redemption to come. We take communion,
 - c. *The Gospel of John refers to Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).*
 - d. Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

2. UNLEAVENED BREAD: **Deliverance (grace)**
 - a. The **afikomen** is a hidden piece of *matzah*... that is broken before the Passover meal. Part of it is **wrapped in a cloth and hidden**. At the end of the meal it is **brought back**, distributed to the participants and eaten as **the final morsel**.
 - b. When Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples in the upper room, He broke the bread we know as the afikomen and distributed it to His disciples saying, *“Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (1 Cor. 11:24)*
 - c. The Festival of Unleavened Bread commemorated God’s deliverance of His people from slavery.
 - d. **Revelation 1:5** says *Jesus “has set us free from our sins by His blood.”*
 - e. Jesus fulfills the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

3. FIRST-FRUITS: Evidence

- a. We celebrate the resurrection of the Lord as First Fruit (**1 Corinthians 15:20&23**) The resurrection of the rest of us as we each follow Him in our own time to Heaven

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep...

But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

- b. Jesus celebrated the Sunday of the week of His crucifixion by rising from the dead
- c. **He rose on the very day of First Fruits.**

4. PENTECOST: Harvest

- a. *See Acts 2... The Church was actually established on this day when God poured out His Holy Spirit and 3,000 Jews responded to Peter's great sermon and his first proclamation of the gospel.*

b. Jesus Gives the harvest of souls.

- c. *Every time followers of Jesus get together for worship another Pentecost occurs, because the Holy Spirit still comes down upon the church, and whenever someone comes to saving faith, Jesus is giving a harvest.*

5. **TRUMPETS:** Transitions

- a. Now, when the trumpet sounds in accordance with **1 Corinthians 15:51- 3**, living believers will cease their harvest and rise from the earth. The Church will be taken out of the world.
- b. *"Where there are two working in a field, one will be taken and the other left."* **(Matthew 24:40)**
- c. The New Testament says that one day God will order trumpets to be blown to herald the arrival of Jesus and the gathering of His church to His side.

First Thessalonians 4:16-17

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

- d. Revelation also says that during God's judgment at the end of this age, seven angels will blow seven trumpets to signal that God's judgment has arrived.

God gave the Festival of Trumpets to foreshadow that a new day is coming. As early as the garden of Eden, God promised to send the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent. Throughout the Old Testament God repeated His promise to send a Messiah to defeat the serpent. God's people anticipated the coming of the Messiah who would crush evil and the evil one.

BE ready & stay focused!

6. **ATONEMENT:** **Redemption**

➤ In the Day of Atonement Jesus takes away sin!

This is the one feast that is not fulfilled by the church, because the Church owes no atonement. The Church is not innocent, of course, but it is exonerated. The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled for the “remnant of Jews” in a wonderful way when the Lord returns at His Second Coming.

7. **TABERNACLES:** **Presence**

- a. Tabernacles represents the Lord’s shelter in the world to come (olam habah), His great Tabernacle to exist in Jerusalem during the Kingdom Age.

Philippians 4:19

“My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

- b. No matter what we go through, no matter what wilderness experience we may have to endure, Jesus will provide our every need.

In the new covenant age we don’t observe the Festival of Tabernacles. We gather to worship in celebration... each week to give thanks and praise to Jesus who provides our salvation and meets our every need.

CLOSE:

COMMUNION

Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a feast (cf. Matthew 22).

Think about it... God invites us to celebrate... to feast with Him! When we consider the joy of being saved, it is difficult to understand people who claim to have that salvation but have no passion to celebrate it together with God's people...

VIDEO: "Come To The Table"

May we never forget...

Our WORSHIP defines our FELLOWSHIP!

When FELLOWSHIP defines worship... it's worship of self.

Let's Pray!

Remember: this is a celebration whose invitation is for
EVERYONE!

VIDEO: "O Come To The Alter"

RESEARCH Notes:

Leviticus 23: “The LORD spoke to Moses” (5X)

A. Weekly Sabbath (v.3) = one of the “holy convocations”
previewed in vv.1-2

B. Annual Feasts/Celebrations

a. The Passover (vv.4-5)

b. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv.6-8)

c. The Feast of First-Fruits (vv.9-14)

d. The Feast of Pentecost/Weeks (vv.15-22)

e. The Feast of Trumpets (vv.23-25)

f. The Day of Atonement (vv.26-32)

g. The Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (vv.33-43)

h. v.44 = “Moses declared to the people... the
appointed feasts of the LORD”

Leviticus 24: “The LORD spoke to Moses” (3X)

A. Lamps/Oil outside the Tabernacle

B. Bread for the Tabernacle

C. Stoning for Blasphemy

D. Eye for an Eye...

Leviticus 25: “The LORD spoke to Moses” (1X)

A. The Sabbath Year (when you get to the Promised Land)

B. The Year of Jubilee

a. General guidelines

b. Particular “inter-Israel” guidelines

i. Ethics

ii. Property

iii. Generosity

1. Poor Brothers

2. Poor Strangers

c. NOTE: 25:8 promises blessings for obedience!

Leviticus 23 offers a summary of the chief celebrations set aside for worship. These are identified as "*appointed feasts of the LORD*" (vv. 2, 4, 37) and "*holy convocations*" (vv. 2, 4, 37) because they are days committed to meet with God...

The convocations were called "holy" because they were consecrated to the Lord's service. They were not family or community potlucks with a bit of religion thrown into the mix. They were celebratory remembrances of their God that called for the people to consecrate themselves to the holy task of worshipping the Lord.

Yes, worship was an assignment for God's people to obey, as it is for us as his Church. The community at worship, both during the regular cycle of gatherings and during special seasons of the sacred year, is a holy task that demands all that we are and the best of what we are.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 exhorts us "*to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.*"

Sacrifice is the major feature of the feasts. Believers in Messiah are not responsible to keep these feasts, but knowledge of them enhances our faith. Our Lord kept every one of them without fail, even celebrating Pesach on His last earthly night.

*From the Old Covenant to the New, Genesis to Revelation, God provides picture after picture of His entire plan for mankind and one of the most startling prophetic pictures is outlined for us in the Jewish feasts of Leviticus 23.... **The Hebrew word for “feasts” (moadim) literally means “appointed times.” God has carefully planned and orchestrated the timing and sequence of each of these seven feasts to reveal to us a special story.... But for both Jews and non-Jews who have placed their faith in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, these special days demonstrate the work of redemption through God’s Son....***

Many Bible scholars and commentators believe that these fall feasts have not yet been fulfilled by Jesus. However, the “blessed hope” (Titus 2:11-15) for all believers in Jesus Christ is that they most assuredly will be fulfilled. As the four spring feasts were fulfilled literally and right on the actual feast day in connection with Christ's first coming, these three fall feasts, it is believed by many, will likewise be fulfilled literally in connection to the Lord's second coming.

- Hebrews4Christians

Through the feasts, God forecast the entire career of the Messiah, the Jews, the Church, and even the other nations.

The Hebrew word for “feasts” (moadim) literally means "appointed times." The feasts were laid out in the calendar year with the first three occurring close together, then the coming of the Holy Spirit shortly after, followed by the long pause waiting the Rapture of the Church. We also see God's clever design shown in the earthly week - six feasts of work and the last one of rest. The biblical history has described some six thousand years, and if we are to foresee the kingdom somewhere in the near future, then a logical one thousand year rest period is coming up.

Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a feast. God invites us to celebrate, and He invites us to celebrate Him.

since God is our greatest reason to celebrate, and since every other reason to celebrate comes from God, why wouldn't we celebrate Him and His salvation? When we consider the joy of being saved, it is difficult to understand people who claim to have that salvation but

have no impulse to celebrate it—they feel no pleasure in getting together with God’s people to worship.

A prominent part of the festivals of the old covenant was giving offerings to God and sharing meals with other people, and verse 22 mentions sharing with the poor and the foreigner. The New Testament also has much to say about our gifts to God and our generosity to others. Second Corinthians 9:7 says we are not to give “reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Do we give generously to God and others?

Do you submit to His lordship over the time in your life? We hardly mentioned the Sabbath day; that’s mentioned in verse 3 of Leviticus 23. God told His people that day was a day of rest and it was a holy day. The principle of setting aside a day of rest and worship is still in effect in the new covenant age. The New Testament tells us to gather together for worship and fellowship. When our time, our schedules, are submitted to His lordship we will do that. In our denomination, studies show that worship attendance is lower than past years, not because there are fewer people but because people are not in worship as regularly as in the past. “We have a lot to do; we’re busy people.” That’s the way we excuse our failure to submit to God’s sovereignty over our time. When we gather with God’s people every week to celebrate our relationship with Him, He’s able to take of our schedule.

If God can arrange history to the hour from over a thousand years away, don't you think He is capable of helping us with the challenges of our schedules? May we submit to His lordship over the days and hours of our lives. – C.C.E.

recall the meaning of the word "appointed," occurring six times in this chapter (vv. 2 [2x], 4 [2x], 37, 44). The word translated "appointed" is related to the word for "congregation" with the understanding that the congregation came together at an appointed place and appointed time. It is a gathering. Who made the appointment? These are sacred days for meetings prearranged by God. In other words, God established meetings with his people who were obligated to attend.

When we skip out on a business meeting, sales meeting, or civic meeting, we in effect send a message, saying, "I don't care enough to be a part." Since God calls his people to meet him, and they have agreed to attend by virtue of their covenant membership, their failing to do so can only be understood as a rebellious act.

The following is a simple seven-step method that I have found helpful for interpreting and applying the law.

First, affirm inspiration and helpfulness. [Second Timothy 3:16](#)

Second, affirm fulfillment in Jesus.

The whole Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus, even the legal sections like Leviticus. After the resurrection of Jesus, He met a few of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. He told them that His life, death, and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament. He said in [Luke 24:44](#),

Everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

“Everything written about *Me* in the Law of Moses.” The law of Moses, including Leviticus, is somehow about Jesus. **Jesus said, “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” ([Matt 5:17](#)).** Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law. How does Jesus fulfill the Law? We’ll see that as we go through Leviticus...

Third, determine what the law/text meant in its original context.

It’s often been said that a text in the Bible cannot mean what it never meant.

Fourth, note the similarities with today's context. (in principle(s))

Fifth, identify principles that apply to both ancient & modern contexts.

Walter Kaiser refers to this as “principlization” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*).

Sixth, consider what the New Testament teaches about each principle.

Does the New Testament teach anything, for example, about the separation of God's people from those who don't know and love God? It does. Did Jesus say anything about that? He did, and He fulfills that part of the Law because He lived separate from the sin of the world, He empowers His followers to be different, and He is the difference between His followers and those who don't know and love God. - Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary

Seventh, apply the principle to your life.

The principle is that God wants us to be different from those who don't know Him. I apply that principle by rejecting the sinful practices of the world and separating myself from them and to Jesus.

- Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Leviticus.

The FEASTS / CELEBRATIONS

PASSOVER:

Passover is the Feast of Salvation. In both testaments, the blood of the Lamb delivers from slavery – the Jew from Egypt, the Christian from sin. Think about the tenth plague in Exodus 12:5 when Egypt’s first born sons died while the angel of death “passed over” the Jewish homes with the blood of the lamb on their door posts. In the B’rit Chadashah, Jesus serves as the sacrificial lamb. It is no coincidence that our Lord Himself was sacrificed on Passover. In Egypt the Jew marked his house with the blood of the lamb. Today the Christian marks his house – his body, “the house of the spirit” with the blood of Christ. Passover, then, represents our salvation.

God's calendar is a lunar calendar based on the phases of the moon. Each month starts with a new

moon, reaching a full moon in the midst of the 28 day cycle. Thus Passover always falls on a full moon - the first full moon of spring (usually April).

Passover is the feast of salvation from sin (1). For the Hebrews it was deliverance from bondage (Exodus 12), and for the Christian, deliverance from sin (1). **Jesus was sacrificed on Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7. John 19:14).** The Jews marked their houses with the blood of the lamb, and **the Christian marks his house (his body, 2 Corinthians 5:1. 1 Corinthians 6:19;3:16) with the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:22, Ephesians 1:7. Revelation 1:5. Romans 5:9. Ephesians 2:13. 1 John 1:7. 1 Peter 1:18,19. Acts 20:28. Revelation 12:11).**

We do not keep the feast in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, since that was a shadow of the greater redemption to come. We take communion, a part of the original Passover feast, in remembrance of the Lord (1) (Matthew 26:27. John 1:29).

To prepare for the Passover meal, each family killed a Passover lamb. They killed the lambs on Friday, since Passover began at sundown on Friday afternoon....
We have seen in the book of Hebrews that the old covenant sacrifices are no longer relevant because Jesus

is the final, once-for-all, perfect sacrifice, and He has made the old covenant sacrifices obsolete.

The Gospel of John refers to Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

God has come to us in Christ Jesus, and He has fulfilled every facet of the sacrificial system in His sacrificial, substitutionary death for our sins on the cross. Now born-again, Spirit-filled followers have peace with God through Christ, who is the perfect sacrifice for sin. As Colossians 1:20 puts it, Christ made “peace through the blood of His cross.”

God arranged for Him to be crucified by the decision of wicked men on the Friday afternoon when the lambs were killed in preparation for the Festival of Passover.

Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

The preaching of the apostles communicated that message verbally, as does the whole New Testament

UNLEAVENED BREAD:

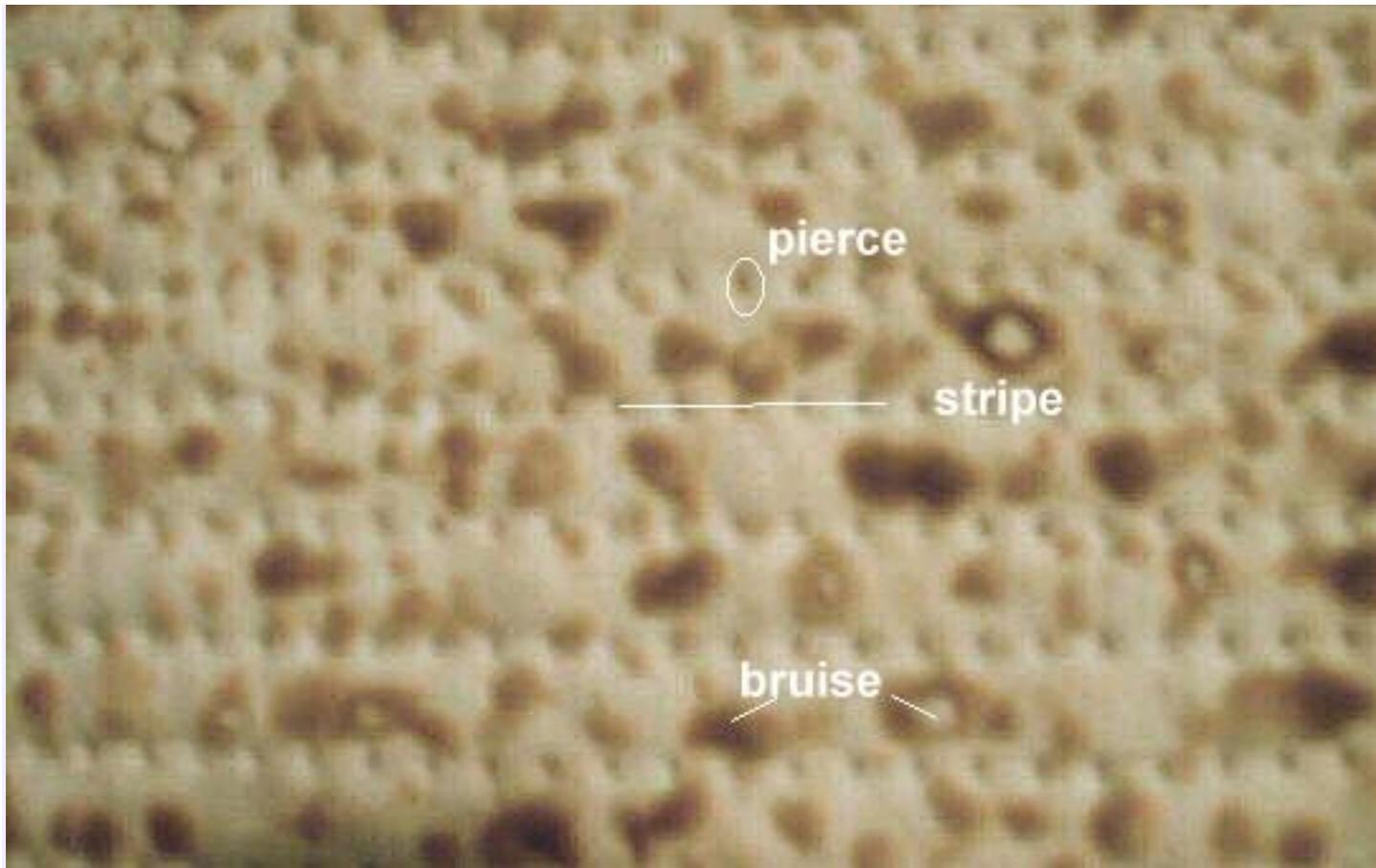
Leaven or yeast in the Bible symbolized sin and evil. Unleavened bread, eaten over a period of time, symbolized a holy walk, as with the Lord.

Unleavened bread, in the B'rit Chadashah [New Testament] is, of course, the body of our Lord. He is described as “the Bread of Life” (Lechem haChayim).

He was born in Bethlehem, which, in Hebrew, means, “House of Bread” (Bet Lechem).

Look at the matzah and see that it is striped: “*By His stripes we are healed*”; pierced: “They shall look upon me whom they’ve pierced,” and pure, without any leaven, as His body was without any sin. And the Passover custom of burying, hiding and then resurrecting the second of three pieces of matzot (the middle piece), presents the Gospel

Here is a close-up picture of a piece of matzoh. It has a lot of Messianic symbolism, discussed below.



- The Bible tells us nothing about what Yeshua looked like—whether he was short, medium height or tall, whether he was thin, medium build or stocky, whether his face was round, elongated, somewhat angular . . .
- Yeshua described himself as *food* for the *spirit*—**John 6:48** "I am the bread of life."
- Realistically, the only portrait we have of Yeshua is in . . . the *matzoh!*
 - Slaves getting ready to leave "at any moment" couldn't wait for dough to rise during baking, so matzoh is made without leaven—which in the Bible is symbolic of sin. Yeshua was sinless.

- Slaves on the run didn't have time to build ovens, so matzoh is cooked on a grill—which leaves lines . . . stripes.
- There is only flame on one side, so the cook pierces the dough as it's cooking, for more even heat.
- Where the flame touches or gets close to the bread it leaves darkened spots that look like bruises.

Isaiah 53:5

But He was **pierced** for our transgressions,
He was **bruised** for our iniquities;
The punishment that brought us peace was
upon Him,
And by His **stripes** we are healed.

...the first and best known of these symbols is called the afikomen According to the late Jewish scholar David Daube and others, *afikomemis* actually a Greek word meaning the coming one” (*habba*’in Hebrew) and is a clear reference to the Messiah.¹

The afikomen is a piece of *matzah*, (unleavened bread) that is broken before the Passover meal. Part of it is wrapped in a cloth and hidden. At the end of the meal it is brought back, distributed to the participants and eaten as the final morsel.

In today's Jewish celebration, the second or middle of three pieces of unleavened bread is taken from a special bag called the *matzah tosh*. The bread is removed, broken, and the portion that is wrapped in the cloth becomes the afikomen that is then hidden from view.

After dinner, the tradition turns into a fun game for the children who search for the afikomen and are rewarded when they find it. The bread is then broken and distributed among the participants who all eat it together. Does this bring anything to mind?

When Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples in the upper room, He broke the bread we know as the afikomen and distributed it to His disciples saying, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." (1 Corinthians 11:24)

We know that our Messiah's sinless body was "broken" in death, wrapped in a cloth and hidden as in burial, then brought back; resurrected by the power of God. It is truly a reward to those who find and partake in the life He offers. Yet the amazing parallels we see in the traditions of the afikomen remain hidden to those who reject Jesus claims.

The afikomen was not part of the original Passover described in the book of Exodus. We are often asked when it was introduced to the service; a very good question to which there is no definitive answer.

David Daube observed, “If there was no previously established symbolism relating to the unleavened bread, then what were his disciples to make of it when he ‘gave to them and said, “Take, eat, this is my body”?’”²

In fact, Jesus’ action and declaration concerning that bread had a historical context.

Rabbi Hillel (who was most active between 30 BC-10AD³) drew special attention to the afikomen as he led people through Passover celebrations. And, in the first century, Rabbi Gamaliel said that the bread pointed to the speed at which salvation came to Israel in Egypt. Further, we know that by the first century, some Jewish people viewed the bread as symbolic of the people of Israel and the hidden piece, the afikomen, as a symbol of the Messiah, who remained hidden from view.⁴

We can’t be certain when the entire afikomen/matzah tosh ceremony was instituted in the Jewish Passover observance; however, we do know there was already

messianic significance associated with that bread by the time Jesus made the startling claim that it pointed to Him.

While so many things are explained at length in the Haggadah,⁵ the ceremony of the afikomen is left without interpretation. It would seem there is a general fear of messianic speculation, or even a more particular wish on the part of Jewish sages to avoid questions about a possible connection to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. (In a similar way, Isaiah 53 is omitted from the cycle of Scripture readings in synagogue.) For those of us who do believe, the tradition of the afikomen confirms the messianic symbolism of the bread that has become part of the church's observance of the Lord's Supper.

- Jews For Jesus

Pointed to the Messiah's sinless life (as leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible), making Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

God told the Jews to eat only the pure unleavened bread during the week following Passover. Leaven in

the Bible typically symbolized sin and evil (1 Corinthians 5:7,8). Unleavened bread, eaten over a period of time symbolized a holy walk with the Lord. In the New Testament, the unleavened bread is the body of our Lord (John 6:33). The piece of bread, Jewish matzo, used by the Jews during this week of Unleavened Bread was striped (just like Jesus' body, Isaiah 53). The Passover ceremony of breaking and burying and then resurrecting a piece of this bread presents the Gospel in the midst of the modern Jewish Passover celebration.

God performed this exact ceremony with the burial of Jesus (1) on the exact day of the feast.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread commemorated God's deliverance of His people from slavery. Jesus delivers from slavery all people who put their faith in Him.

Revelation 1:5 says *Jesus "has set us free from our sins by His blood."*

Jesus delivers us from slavery to sin, self, and the Devil. Jesus fulfills the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

FIRST-FRUITS:

God wanted a special feast during which the Jews would acknowledge the fertility of the fine land He gave them. They were to bring the early crops of their spring planting (first fruits) to the priest at the Temple to be waved before the Lord on their behalf. This was to be done "the morrow after the Sabbath" or Sunday. Since the feast of Unleavened Bread was seven days long, one of those days would be a Sunday.

We have come to call this feast Easter after the Babylonian goddess, Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. But the celebration was to be over God's replanting of the earth in the spring. We miss an important truth by not using the term "First Fruits" because "first" implies a second, third, etc...

We celebrate the resurrection of the Lord as First Fruit (1 Corinthians 15:20,23) and the resurrection of the rest of us as we each follow Him (1) in our own time to Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).

Jesus celebrated the Sunday of the week of His crucifixion by rising from the dead (1).

It was not some other day He chose but the very day of First Fruits.

First Fruits was the last of the feasts that the Lord was seen personally fulfilling on earth.

Festival of Unleavened Bread began on the day after Passover.

When Jesus was crucified at the beginning of Passover, the day of Passover, the fourteenth of Nisan, was also a Sabbath, a Saturday. The next day was Sunday. That day began the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and in the case of the year Jesus was crucified that Sunday was also the Festival of Firstfruits because it was the day after a Sabbath during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

That Sunday was the Festival of Firstfruits, and it was the day Jesus was resurrected.

Jesus rose from the dead on that day; He was the first to rise from the dead.

Therefore, [1 Corinthians 15:20](#) refers to Jesus as *“the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”*

Jesus rose from the dead, and all those who put their faith in Him will also rise to eternal life.

Jesus is the firstfruits; we are the harvest that comes after Him.

the old covenant sacrifices prepared the world for the sacrifice of Jesus and they taught the meaning of His sacrifice.

The festivals of the old covenant period were also preparatory and pedagogical—they prepared the world for what God did in Jesus, and they taught the meaning of what He did.

T/S: Next, 50 days after the Festival of Firstfruits, the Festival of Pentecost occurred.

PENTECOST/WEEKS:

In late May or early June, Shavu'ot marked the summer harvest. Leviticus 23:17 requires an offering of two loaves of bread, baked with leaven. These loaves symbolize the church being comprised of both Jew and Gentile.

God gave very specific directions for counting the proper number of days until the Feast of Harvest, which we refer to as Pentecost. It was to take place exactly 50 days after First Fruits (usually late May or early June). It actually marked the summer harvest. Here two "wave loaves" of equal weight were baked with leaven, representing sinful man and called "firstfruits" thereby representing redeemed or resurrected men. God was

predicting that the Church would be comprised of two parts, Jew and Gentile.

Jesus rejoined His disciples after His resurrection and taught them for forty days. Then He told them to wait at Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come. And He did, exactly on the day of the feast (Acts 1:3).

It was a great "harvest" of souls as 3000 people joined in that day (Acts 2:1. Exodus 32:28). Of course that is only a token of the harvest that will occur at the rapture of the church.

(see Acts 2). The Church was actually established on this day when God poured out His Holy Spirit and 3,000 Jews responded to Peter's great sermon and his first proclamation of the gospel.

In the Festival of Pentecost We See that Jesus Gives the Harvest

Acts says that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the church.

Acts 2:41 says, *“That day about 3,000 people were added to them.”*

Those new Christians were the harvested fruit of the continuing ministry of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. It was a harvest of souls.

God's Spirit reaped a harvest on the day God had chosen over 1,400 years earlier as a celebration of the harvest.

On the day of Pentecost, the sickle of the Holy Spirit came down and reaped a harvest.

Every time followers of Jesus get together for worship another Pentecost occurs, because the Holy Spirit still comes down upon the church, and whenever someone comes to saving faith, Jesus is giving a harvest.

T/S: Four coincidences are hard to explain away, especially when each one is so completely appropriate to its purpose. Because we have not yet seen the fulfillment to feast number five, we remain under the orders of Pentecost, continuing the summer crop cultivation, as we work in the field until the great harvest marked by the next feast.

T/S:

Yeshua was crucified on Pesach, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits and sent the Ruach Hakkodesh on

Shavu'ot. Because we have not yet seen the fulfillment of feast number five - Trumpets - we remain under the orders of Shavu'ot.

TRUMPETS:

God seems to have enjoyed the trumpet. He used it when Joshua conquered Jericho. In Leviticus 25:8-10, he specified its use in having trumpets “proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (that quotation appears today on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, assuring us that America was founded by Bible readers). Leviticus 23:24 requires that, “in the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets.”

This jump in time from the Feast of Pentecost in May or June seems to represent the Church Age in God’s planning, since the trumpet unquestionably represents the Rapture of the Church. The trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the Temple. The high priest actually blew the trumpet so that the faithful would stop harvesting to worship. Now, when the trumpet sounds in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15:51- 3, living believers will cease their harvest and rise from the earth. The Church will be taken out of the world. *(BE READY & STAY FOCUSED!)*

This jump in time from the last feast represents the Church Age, since the trumpet represents the Rapture of the Church (1) (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

The trumpet blowing was a signal for the field workers to stop harvesting and leave immediately (1) for worship at the Temple. Imagine a Jew and Arab working side by side in the field. The Jew would leave and the Arab would stay. "Where there are two working in a field, one will be taken and the other left." (Matthew 24:40)

The Festival of Trumpets was the New Year festival. Today Jewish people refer to the day as Rosh Hashanah

In the old covenant period leaders used trumpets to call God's people together

The New Testament says that one day God will order trumpets to be blown to herald the arrival of Jesus and the gathering of His church to His side.

First Thessalonians 4:16-17 says,

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel's voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

Revelation also says that during God's judgment at the end of this age, seven angels will blow seven trumpets to signal that God's judgment has arrived.

God gave the Festival of Trumpets to foreshadow that a new day is coming. As early as the garden of Eden, God promised to send the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent. Throughout the Old Testament God repeated His promise to send a Messiah to defeat the serpent. God's people anticipated the coming of the Messiah who would crush evil and the evil one. When the trumpets sounded at every New Year celebration, they knew they were one year closer to the arrival of the Messiah.

DAY of ATONEMENT:

Atonement (Yom Kippur). Leviticus 23:27 provides a day of confession, the highest of holy days.

This is the one feast that is not fulfilled by the church, because the Church owes no atonement. The Church is not innocent, of course, but it is exonerated. The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled in a wonderful way when the Lord returns at His Second Coming.

On the Day of Atonement, the Jew either lived or died. The High Priest of Israel entered the Holy of Holies to make a sacrifice on behalf of himself and Israel. If the Jew did not strictly follow the law of Leviticus 23:28-30 and Leviticus 23:32, he could be cut off (1) from his people. For that 24 hour period he was to do no work, but rather was to use the time for confessing his sins of the entire year. We might even balk at the idea of merely staying awake for 24 hours, but if our salvation hung in the balance, we would try to make it.

This feast will not be fulfilled by the church, because the church owes no atonement. The church is not innocent of course, but Jesus has paid the price for our sins.

The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled for the Jews when the Lord returns at His second coming (Zechariah 12:10. Romans 11:1-6;25-36).

Many believe this prophetically points to the day of the Second Coming of Jesus when He will return to earth. That will be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish remnant when they "look upon Him whom they have pierced," repent of their sins, and receive Him as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10 and Romans 11:1-6, 25-36).

Sin **In the Day of Atonement We See that Jesus Takes Away**

God gave the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, to provide ceremonies that symbolized His removal of Israel's sin.

The Day of Atonement was unique.

The sacrificial rituals on that day were different from the five types of sacrifices God commanded in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. The Day of Atonement rituals were different in at least six ways.

- 7. First, the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were for all the people, whereas the sacrifices described in chapters 1-7 were for the purpose of the worship of individual Israelites.**
- 8. Second, the rituals described for the Day of Atonement were observed only on one day per year.**

9. Third, all the sacrifices described in [chapters 1–7](#) could be offered by any priest, but **only the high priest performed the rituals of the Day of Atonement.**
10. Fourth, **none of the other rituals involved the space known as the most holy place, where the ark and the mercy seat were located.** However, on the Day of Atonement the high priest entered the most holy place to make atonement for himself and for all the people.
11. Fifth, on the Day of Atonement **the high priest observed atoning rituals not only for himself and for all the people, but also for the “holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar”** ([16:20](#)).
12. **The sixth unique feature of the Day of Atonement was the scapegoat.** During the Day of Atonement two goats were offered as sacrifices (in addition to a bull and a ram). The high priest burned one of the goats on the altar, and the other was kept alive as the “scapegoat” and sent away into the wilderness.

The writer of Hebrews referred to the Day of Atonement rituals in order to show how Jesus has fulfilled and superseded them. Just as the Day of Atonement contrasted with the other sacrificial rites, Jesus’ sacrifice contrasts with the Day of Atonement rites and has replaced all the old covenant sacrifices.

1. As [Hebrews 8:6](#) says, “*Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry.*”
2. [Hebrews 9](#) calls *Jesus the “high priest”* (v. 11) who entered the most holy place. However, He did not enter

- the earthly tabernacle but “the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (v. 11), “into heaven itself” (v. 24).
- a. Thus, Jesus made His sacrifice before God the Father Himself.
 - b. Also, Jesus offered His sacrifice only once, not once per year (vv. 12,25-26).
3. Third, Jesus did not offer the blood of animals, but His own blood as a sacrifice (v. 12).
- a. Therefore, *Jesus is “the mediator of a new covenant” (v. 15).*
 - b. Jesus fulfills the Day of Atonement rituals because He takes away our sins.
 - c. He is our scapegoat; our sin was placed on Him, and He went outside the gate of the city to be crucified as a sacrifice for our sins.

TABERNACLES/BOOTHS:

Many scholars believe that this feast day points to the Lord's promise that He will once again “tabernacle” with His people when He returns to reign over all the world (Micah 4:1-7).

This is God's celebration of the fact that He provided shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness. Each year

on Tabernacles, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, devout Jews build little shelters outside their houses, and worship in them.

Tabernacles represents the Lord's shelter in the world to come (olam habah), His great Tabernacle to exist in Jerusalem during the Kingdom Age.

Us In the Festival of Booths We See that Jesus Provides for

This festival commemorated God's provision during all the hardships of the Jews' 40-year wilderness wandering.

Philippians 4:19 says, *“My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*

No matter what we go through, no matter what wilderness experience we may have to endure, Jesus will provide our every need.

In the new covenant age we don't observe the Festival of Booths. We don't construct booths and live in them one week every year, but we do gather each week to give thanks and praise to Jesus who provides our salvation and meets our every need.

CLOSE:

The operating principle should be what we hear from Paul regarding Christian behavior: "... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The question we must ask ourselves each day, including each Lord's Day, is, am I honoring the Lord by my conduct today?

*Whether or not a Christian celebrates the Jewish feast days would be a matter of conscience for the individual Christian. **Colossians 2:16-17** tells us, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."*

Christians are not bound to observe the Jewish feasts the way an Old Testament Jew was, but we should not criticize another believer who does or does not observe these special days and feasts (Romans 14:5).

While it is not required for Christians to celebrate the Jewish feast days, it is beneficial to study them... if it leads one to a greater understanding and

appreciation for Christ's death and resurrection and the future promise of His coming.

REMEMBER: the convocations were called "holy" because they were consecrated to the Lord's service. They were not family or community potlucks with a bit of religion thrown into the mix. They were celebratory remembrances of their God that called for the people to consecrate themselves to the holy task of worshipping the Lord.

Yes, worship was an assignment for God's people to obey, as it is for us as his Church.

Our WORSHIP defines our FELLOWSHIP!

When FELLOWSHIP defines worship... it's worship of self.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 exhorts us *"to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together."*

- C. Weekly Sabbath (v.3) = one of the “holy convocations” previewed in vv.1-2
- D. Annual Feasts/Celebrations
 - a. The Passover (vv.4-5)
 - b. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv.6-8)
 - c. The Feast of First-Fruits (vv.9-14)
 - d. The Feast of Pentecost/Weeks (vv.15-22)
 - e. The Feast of Trumpets (vv.23-25)
 - f. The Day of Atonement (vv.26-32)
 - g. The Feast of Tabernacles/Booths (vv.33-43)
 - h. v.44 = “Moses declared to the people... the appointed feasts of the LORD”

Leviticus 24: “The LORD spoke to Moses” (3X)

- E. Lamps/Oil outside the Tabernacle
- F. Bread for the Tabernacle
- G. Stoning for Blasphemy
- H. Eye for an Eye...

Leviticus 25: “The LORD spoke to Moses” (1X)

- C. The Sabbath Year (when you get to the Promised Land)
- D. The Year of Jubilee
 - a. General guidelines
 - b. Particular “inter-Israel” guidelines
 - i. Ethics
 - ii. Property
 - iii. Generosity
 - 1. Poor Brothers
 - 2. Poor Strangers
 - c. NOTE: 25:8 promises blessings for obedience!

Learn the New Covenant Connections God Made

Amazingly, God timed the most important events in Jesus’ saving work to coincide with festivals He had commanded His people to observe over 1,400 years earlier. We will review briefly each festival and the connection with the atoning work of Jesus.

I. In the Passover We See that Jesus Is Our Passover Lamb

To prepare for the Passover meal, each family killed a Passover lamb. They killed the lambs on Friday, since Passover began at sundown on Friday afternoon. Why does the church no longer offer the sacrifices described in the book of Leviticus? We have seen in the book of Hebrews that the old covenant sacrifices are no longer relevant because Jesus is the

final, once-for-all, perfect sacrifice, and He has made the old covenant sacrifices obsolete. *The Gospel of John refers to Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).*

God has come to us in Christ Jesus, and He has fulfilled every facet of the sacrificial system in His sacrificial, substitutionary death for our sins on the cross. Now born-again, Spirit-filled followers have peace with God through Christ, who is the perfect sacrifice for sin. As Colossians 1:20 puts it, Christ made “peace through the blood of His cross.” Ephesians 2:14 says of Jesus, “He is our peace,” and Ephesians 6:15 calls Jesus’ gospel “the gospel of peace.” Romans 5:1 says it plainly: “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Of the 365 days God could have chosen for Jesus’ crucifixion, God arranged for Him to be crucified by the decision of wicked men on the Friday afternoon when the lambs were killed in preparation for the Festival of Passover. God was teaching a lesson. **Jesus is our Passover Lamb.** Just as God delivered the Hebrew slaves in Egypt from death when they put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost, God also delivers every person from eternal death when they put their faith in Jesus the Lamb of God who shed His blood for our sin. The preaching of the apostles communicated that message verbally, as does the whole New Testament. The timing God arranged for the death of Jesus communicates that message symbolically. The providential calendar correspondence between the testaments is so clear that **Gordon Wenham** wrote, *“Nowhere is the continuity between the testaments so clear as in the calendar”* (Leviticus, 306). *God arranged for Jesus, the Son of God and the Lamb of God, to be killed at the time of the Passover to fulfill that part of His old covenant commands. The timing of the death of Jesus is nothing short of a divine miracle and demonstrates that our God is sovereign over time.*

II. In the Festival of Unleavened Bread... See Jesus Delivers Us from Slavery

The Festival of Unleavened Bread commemorated God’s deliverance of His people from slavery. Jesus delivers from slavery all people who put their faith in Him. In John 8 Jesus said, “Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin,” but “if the Son sets you free, you really will be free” (vv. 34,36). Revelation 1:5 says *Jesus “has set us free from our sins by His blood.”* Jesus delivers us from slavery to sin, self, and the Devil. Jesus fulfills the Festival of Unleavened Bread.

III. In the Festival of Firstfruits...See Jesus Is the Firstfruits of Our Resurrection

Passover was on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, and **the Festival of Unleavened Bread began on the day after Passover**, on the fifteenth day of Nisan. During the week of the Festival of Unleavened Bread a Sabbath would have occurred. The Sabbath was a Saturday, and the next day was a Sunday. When Jesus was crucified at the beginning of Passover, the day of Passover, the fourteenth of Nisan, was also a Sabbath, a Saturday. The next day was Sunday. That day began the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and in the case of the year Jesus was crucified that Sunday was also the Festival of Firstfruits because it was the day after a Sabbath during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. That Sunday was the Festival of Firstfruits, and it was the day Jesus was resurrected. During the Festival of Firstfruits the Jews thanked God for the firstfruits and the coming harvest. Jesus rose from the dead on that day; He was the first to rise from the dead. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 15:20 refers to Jesus as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Jesus rose from the dead, and all those who put their faith in Him will also rise to eternal life. He is the firstfruits; we are the harvest that comes after Him.

In the timing of Jesus’ death and resurrection God has given us physical, historical illustrations of what He did in Jesus. We have said that the sacrificial system described in Leviticus was preparatory and pedagogical. In other words...

the old covenant sacrifices prepared the world for the sacrifice of Jesus and they taught the meaning of His sacrifice. The festivals of the old covenant period were also preparatory and pedagogical—they prepared the world for what God did in Jesus, and they taught the meaning of what He did.

He is our Passover Lamb, He delivers us from slavery as God delivered the Hebrews, and He rose from the grave as the firstfruits of all the people who will be resurrected when they put their faith in Him.

Next, 50 days after the Festival of Firstfruits, the Festival of Pentecost occurred.

IV. In the Festival of Pentecost We See that Jesus Gives the Harvest

Pentecost was a harvest festival. How did Jesus fulfill that harvest? On the Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus, was there a harvest? Yes, the second chapter of Acts says that on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the church. Acts 2:41 says, “That day about 3,000 people were added to them.” Those new Christians were the harvested fruit of

the continuing ministry of Jesus through the Holy Spirit. It was a harvest of souls. The early church father Chrysostom made this connection explicit. He wrote, “What is this Pentecost? The time when the sickle was to be put to the harvest, and the ingathering was made.” Then he wrote of the Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came on the church and 3,000 people were saved, “Here, as the sickle, keen-edged, came the Spirit down” (“Chrysostom,” *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 11:25). God’s Spirit reaped a harvest on the day God had chosen over 1,400 years earlier as a celebration of the harvest. On the day of Pentecost, the sickle of the Holy Spirit came down and reaped a harvest. Every time followers of Jesus get together for worship another Pentecost occurs, because the Holy Spirit still comes down upon the church, and whenever someone comes to saving faith, Jesus is giving a harvest.

V. In the Festival of Trumpets We See that Trumpets Will Signal Jesus’ Coming

The Festival of Trumpets was the New Year festival. Today Jewish people refer to the day as Rosh Hashanah—the head/beginning of the year. The trumpets heralded the New Year. In the old covenant period leaders used trumpets to call God’s people together—for the New Year, for battle, and for other purposes. The New Testament says that one day God will order trumpets to be blown to herald the arrival of Jesus and the gathering of His church to His side. First Thessalonians 4:16-17 says,

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the archangel’s voice, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

When the Lord Jesus returns, He will call out a command, an archangel will speak, and a trumpet will sound. The book of Revelation also says that during God’s judgment at the end of this age, seven angels will blow seven trumpets to signal that God’s judgment has arrived. God gave the Festival of Trumpets to foreshadow that a new day is coming. As early as the garden of Eden, God promised to send the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent. Throughout the Old Testament God repeated His promise to send a Messiah to defeat the serpent. God’s people anticipated the coming of the Messiah who would crush evil and the evil one. When the trumpets sounded at every New Year celebration, they knew they were one year closer to the arrival of the Messiah. God says that one day His trumpet will sound and Jesus “will descend from heaven with a shout.”

VI. In the Day of Atonement We See that Jesus Takes Away Sin

God gave the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, to provide ceremonies that symbolized His removal of Israel’s sin.

The Day of Atonement was unique.

The sacrificial rituals on that day were different from the five types of sacrifices God commanded in the first seven chapters of Leviticus. The Day of Atonement rituals were different in at least six ways.

13. **First, the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were for all the people**, whereas the sacrifices described in [chapters 1–7](#) were for the purpose of the worship of individual Israelites.
14. **Second, the rituals described for the Day of Atonement were observed only on one day per year.**
15. Third, all the sacrifices described in [chapters 1–7](#) could be offered by any priest, but **only the high priest performed the rituals of the Day of Atonement.**
16. Fourth, **none of the other rituals involved the space known as the most holy place, where the ark and the mercy seat were located.** However, on the Day of Atonement the high priest entered the most holy place to make atonement for himself and for all the people.
17. Fifth, on the Day of Atonement **the high priest observed atoning rituals not only for himself and for all the people, but also for the “holy place, the tent of meeting, and the altar” (16:20).**
18. **The sixth unique feature of the Day of Atonement was the scapegoat.** During the Day of Atonement two goats were offered as sacrifices (in addition to a bull and a ram). The high priest burned one of the goats on the altar, and the other was kept alive as the “scapegoat” and sent away into the wilderness.

The writer of Hebrews referred to the Day of Atonement rituals in order to show how Jesus has fulfilled and superseded them. Just as the Day of Atonement contrasted with the other sacrificial rites, Jesus’ sacrifice contrasts with the Day of Atonement rites and has replaced all the old covenant sacrifices.

4. As [Hebrews 8:6](#) says, *“Jesus has now obtained a superior ministry.”*
5. [Hebrews 9](#) calls *Jesus the “high priest” (v. 11)* who entered the most holy place. However, He did not enter the earthly tabernacle but “the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (v. 11), “into heaven itself” (v. 24).
 - a. Thus, Jesus made His sacrifice before God the Father Himself.
 - b. Also, Jesus offered His sacrifice only once, not once per year ([vv. 12,25-26](#)).
6. Third, **Jesus did not offer the blood of animals, but His own blood as a sacrifice (v. 12).**
 - a. Therefore, *Jesus is “the mediator of a new covenant” (v. 15).*
 - b. **Jesus fulfills the Day of Atonement rituals** because He takes away our sins.
 - c. **He is our scapegoat; our sin was placed on Him, and He went outside the gate of the city to be crucified as a sacrifice for our sins.**

VII. In the Festival of Booths We See that Jesus Provides for Us

The Festival of Booths was last on the sacred calendar. [This festival commemorated God's provision during all the hardships of the Jews' 40-year wilderness wandering.](#) What does the New Testament tell us about Jesus? [Philippians 4:19](#) says, "*My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*"

No matter what we go through, no matter what wilderness experience we may have to endure, Jesus will provide our every need.

[In the new covenant age we don't observe the Festival of Booths. We don't construct booths and live in them one week every year, but we do gather each week to give thanks and praise to Jesus who provides our salvation and meets our every need.](#)

Live by the Covenant Celebrations God Established

God communicated powerful truths in the old covenant sacred calendar and in its fulfillment in Jesus. The way we live should be altered by those truths. How should we live differently in light of God's revealed truth in [Leviticus 23](#)?

We Seek God's Presence

Going into the presence of God was the purpose of the festival days. God established times when His people would formally come into His presence. Those days—the high, holy days—were not the only times God wanted His people to come to Him. But He ordered the calendar so all year long they would never forget to come to Him. The festivals communicate the message that every season, every experience during the year, every emotion, is directed to God. All of life relates to Him. Financial income, the blessing of the harvest, is *His* provision, so we go to Him and give thanks. When we think about the good times in our pasts, those good times were God's blessings, so we go to Him and give Him praise that He was working in ways we could not even see at the time. As we approach a new year, we go into His presence and commit the year to Him. We also go to Him to confess sin and receive His forgiveness and cleansing. God ordered the calendar of His people around fellowship with Him. God's arrangement of the year in that way constitutes an exhortation to us—seek God's presence.

We Celebrate God and His Salvation

We have many moments of celebration in our lives. We celebrate winning a game or a championship. We throw a big party at a wedding. We celebrate graduations, anniversaries, and milestone birthdays. Before I came to faith in Jesus it never occurred to me that God had anything to do with moments of celebration like that, but He does. God made us as people who celebrate. We yell with joy when our team wins. We laugh and sing at birthday parties. We have a special dinner to celebrate a promotion or retirement. We throw a party to celebrate friendship.

God is not opposed to that. He instituted festivals and feasts.

Jesus went to at least one wedding, He shared meals with people, and He said the kingdom of God is like a feast. God invites us to celebrate, and He invites us to celebrate Him.

He is our greatest joy, and He is the source of every other joy. Since God made us to celebrate, since God ordered the calendar of His people around celebrations,

since God is our greatest reason to celebrate, and since every other reason to celebrate comes from God, why wouldn't we celebrate Him and His salvation? When we consider the joy of being saved, it is difficult to understand people who claim to have that salvation but have no impulse to celebrate it—they feel no pleasure in getting together with God's people to worship.

The sacred calendar of the old covenant says that knowing God is good, life's blessings come from Him, and going into His presence is a feast. We celebrate God and His salvation.

We Share Gifts with God and Others

A prominent part of the festivals of the old covenant was giving offerings to God and sharing meals with other people, and [verse 22](#) mentions sharing with the poor and the foreigner. The New Testament also has much to say about our gifts to God and our generosity to others. [Second Corinthians 9:7](#) says we are not to give “reluctantly or out of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Do we give generously to God and others?

We Submit to God's Sovereignty over Time

The sacred calendar of the old covenant communicated the message that God is the Master of time. Through the centuries Jewish children asked their parents, “Why are we going to Jerusalem for the Festival of Unleavened Bread?” Their parents would say, “Because God told us to go to this festival during this week, and throughout the year we do what He tells us to do.”

Furthermore, God's fulfillment of the sacred calendar in Jesus shows us that He controls time. The Dutch statesman and theologian Abraham Kuyper once famously said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: Mine!” To paraphrase Kuyper, there is not a split second in all of our existence over which Christ does not claim ownership! He is sovereign over time.

Do you submit to His lordship over the time in your life? We hardly mentioned the Sabbath day; that's mentioned in [verse 3](#) of [Leviticus 23](#). God told His people that day was a day of rest and it was a holy day. The principle of setting aside a day of rest and worship is still in effect in the new covenant age. The New Testament tells us to gather together for worship and fellowship. When our time, our schedules, are submitted to His lordship we will do that. In our

denomination, studies show that worship attendance is lower than past years, not because there are fewer people but because people are not in worship as regularly as in the past. “We have a lot to do; we’re busy people.” That’s the way we excuse our failure to submit to God’s sovereignty over our time. When we gather with God’s people every week to celebrate our relationship with Him, He’s able to take of our schedule.

When the Jews and Romans colluded to put Jesus to death, they thought they were in charge of Jesus’ fate. They had positions of authority that made them appear to be the masters of that place and time. And they *were* responsible for Jesus’ death. When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, he told them, “You used lawless people to nail Him to a cross and kill Him” ([Acts 2:23](#)). However, in His providential sovereignty God was also guiding all the decisions and events in connection with the death of Jesus. As Peter put it, “He was delivered up according to God’s determined plan and foreknowledge” ([Acts 2:23](#)). The authorities thought the decision to kill Jesus on the afternoon beginning Passover was solely *their* decision. But over 1,400 years before that day when God’s people were slaves in Egypt, God told them to kill a lamb and put its blood over their doors and He would save them from death. When God told them that, He knew that 1,400 years later—to the hour—He would arrange the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If God can arrange history to the hour from over a thousand years away, don’t you think He is capable of helping us with the challenges of our schedules? May we submit to His lordship over the days and hours of our lives.

Let us make Him the focal point of all our celebration and acknowledge Him and speak to Him in every task and moment. We praise Him as the God over time. We spend time with Him, and we obey what He tells us to do with our time.

Reflect and Discuss

1. In the old covenant period, what messages did God’s sacred calendar communicate?
2. What principles from Israel’s celebrations can you apply to your life?
3. Why should we learn about festivals that we no longer celebrate?
4. Explain Gordon Wenham’s statement, “Nowhere is the continuity between the testaments so clear as in the calendar.”
5. On what day did God arrange for Jesus to be crucified? What is the significance of this?
6. What festival was celebrated on the day Jesus was resurrected? Explain why this is important.
7. What harvest did God give on the Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Jesus?
8. What does the Festival of Trumpets foreshadow?
9. How should we live differently in light of God’s revealed truth in [Leviticus 23](#)?
10. Do you order your life and plan your days according to the truth of God’s Word?

- Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Leviticus.

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The annual cycle of the appointed feasts of the Lord is regarded by many as *typical* of God's future program for Israel as a nation. The interrelated spring and early summer festivals are thought to typify the events of Christ's First Advent: (a) the death of Christ on the cross as the Passover Lamb ([1 Cor. 5:7](#)), (b) the believer's holy walk and complete break from the old life, pictured by the absence of leaven ([1 Cor. 5:7-8](#)) (others think the unleavened bread pictures the sinless humanity of Christ), (c) the resurrection of Christ as prefigured by the firstfruits of the barley harvest ([1 Cor. 15:20-23](#)), and (d) the advent of the Holy Spirit as a fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost ([Acts 2](#); cf. [Joel 2:28](#)). The break in the festival calendar before the fall festivals suggests the present interadvent period during which Israel's messianic King is in heaven. The fall festivals prefigure events associated with His Second Advent: (a) Israel's future regathering at the end of the Tribulation period (Feast of Trumpets; [Matt. 24:29-31](#)), (b) Israel's national conversion at the Second Advent based on the death of Christ at the First Advent (Day of Atonement; [Heb. 9:23-28](#); [Zech. 12:10-13:1](#); [Rom. 11:26-27](#)), and (c) Israel's blessing by God on the millennial earth (Feast of Tabernacles, [Zech. 14:9-20](#)).

- Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

[Leviticus 23:1-44](#)

All in Good Time

The Weekly Sabbath [23:1-3](#)

Spring Holy Days [23:4-22](#)

Fall Holy Days [23:23-44](#)

Setting Up the Section

The Lord's appointed times are festivals and holy days that commemorate significant times and events in Israel's history. The commemorative holidays show truths of God's salvation, love, and plans. The appointed times create a sacred rhythm in the lives of the Israelites.

[23:1-3](#)

The Weekly Sabbath

Sabbath means “rest.” The Sabbath celebration has its roots in the creation of the world ([Genesis 2:1-3](#)). God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, separating it from the others in kind and character. The Sabbath becomes a day of rest in a week otherwise filled with toil and work.

[23:4-22](#)

Spring Holy Days

The Israelites celebrate Passover ([Leviticus 23:4-5](#)) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread ([23:6-8](#)) together. The first month in the sacred Jewish calendar is marked by Passover, a day celebrating Israel’s deliverance from captivity and birth as a nation. It is the most important festival. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is an extension of Passover. This is a time for the Israelites to remember their identity as God’s people.

The Festival of Firstfruits ([23:9-14](#)) is a time for the Israelites who were camped in the desert to be reminded of the hope of future blessings in Canaan ([23:10](#)). On this day, the first sheaf of barley is harvested, but nothing can be eaten until the sheaf is waved before God as an act of thanksgiving for His provision. The priest would also make a burnt offering together with a grain offering and a drink offering of wine ([23:12-13](#)).

The Festival of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks ([23:15-22](#)), gets its name from the counting of fifty days from the Sabbath following Passover. It coincides with and celebrates God’s giving of His law at Mount Sinai. The feast also includes several offerings to God, and the Israelites are instructed to leave the edges of their crops unharvested for the poor and the foreigner as well ([23:22](#)).

Demystifying Leviticus

The Jewish calendar is based on the relative motion of both the moon and the sun. Each month is defined by phases of the moon. The first of every month coincides with a new moon, and the fifteenth of every month coincides with a full moon. The calendar keeps the months and their respective seasons together by inserting a leap month, meaning most years have twelve months, but some have thirteen.

The primary markers in the calendar are the sacred holidays.

[23:23-44](#)

Fall Holy Days

The Festival of Trumpets ([23:23-25](#)) is known today as Rosh Hashanah. It is a day marked by assembling together, doing no regular work, and commemorated by blowing trumpets with

fanfare. It is a reminder that the Day of Atonement is approaching and a time for the Israelites to reflect on the year and their relationship to God.

Following the somber reflection of the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles ([23:33-43](#)) is the joyous holiday of the manifest presence of God. As a reminder to younger generations of God's deliverance of the Israelites in Egypt, they are all to live in booths (temporary shelters made of tree branches and palm leaves) for seven days.

Take It Home

The story of God's deliverance and salvation is told without words through the tastes of Passover, waving of the sheaf during Firstfruits, waving of loaves on Pentecost, the sound of trumpets, and temporary tabernacles. These days speak of past and future deliverance, and they provide markers each year in the life of a Jew. Do you have any kind of sacred rhythm in your own life? Are there any visual markers that help you remember God's presence?

Religious Month	Canaanite Name	Babylonian Name	Gregorian Placement	Holy Day
First	Abib	Nisan	March or April	Passover; Feast of Unleavened Bread; Wave Offering of Firstfruits
Second	Ziv	Iyyar	April or May	
Third		Sivan	May or June	Pentecost
Fourth		Tammuz	June or July	
Fifth		Ab	July or August	
Sixth		Elul	August or September	
Seventh	Ethanim	Tishri	September or October	Trumpets; Day of Atonement; Feast of Tabernacles
Eighth	Bul	Cheshvan	October or November	

Ninth	Chislev	November or December	
Tenth	Tebeth	December or January	
Eleventh	Shebat	January or February	
Twelfth	Adar	February or March	
Thirteenth	Adar II	March	This is the leap month

Layman's Bible Commentary - Layman's Bible Commentary – Volume 1: Genesis thru Numbers.

The Seven Feasts of Israel

(Bible.org)



Note that the first three feasts occur within an eight day period. Fifty days following the after Passover the Feast of Pentecost occurs. It is also known as the Feast of Weeks. The beginning of the Jewish Holiday Years, or Feast Year, is reckoned from the first day of Nisan.

Through the feasts, God forecast the entire career of the Messiah, the Jews, the Church, and even the other nations.

The Hebrew word for “feasts” (moadim) literally means “appointed times.” The feasts were laid out in the calendar year with the first three occurring close together, then the coming of the Holy Spirit shortly after, followed by the long pause waiting the Rapture of the Church. We also see God's clever design shown in the earthly week - six feasts of work and the last one of rest. The biblical history has described some six thousand years, and if we are to foresee the kingdom somewhere in the near future, then a logical one thousand year rest period is coming up. (3)

I. The Feast of PASSOVER ([Leviticus 23:5](#))

God's calendar is a lunar calendar based on the phases of the moon. Each month starts with a new moon, reaching a full moon in the midst of the 28 day cycle. Thus Passover always falls on a full moon - the first full moon of spring (usually April).

Passover is the feast of salvation from [sin](#) (1). For the Hebrews it was deliverance from bondage ([Exodus 12](#)), and for the Christian, [deliverance from sin](#) (1). Jesus was sacrificed on Passover ([1 Corinthians 5:7](#). [John 19:14](#)). The Jews marked their houses with the blood of the lamb, and the Christian marks his house (his body, [2 Corinthians 5:1](#). [1 Corinthians 6:19;3:16](#)) with the blood of Christ ([Hebrews 9:22](#), [Ephesians 1:7](#). [Revelation 1:5](#). [Romans 5:9](#). [Ephesians 2:13](#). [1 John 1:7](#). [1 Peter 1:18,19](#). [Acts 20:28](#). [Revelation 12:11](#)). We do not keep the feast in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt, since that was a shadow of the greater redemption to come. We take communion, a part of the original Passover feast, in remembrance of [the Lord](#) (1) ([Matthew 26:27](#). [John 1:29](#)).

II. The feast of UNLEAVENED BREAD ([Leviticus 23:6](#))

The second feast begins on the next night after Passover. God told the Jews to eat only the pure unleavened bread during the week following Passover. Leaven in the Bible typically symbolized sin and evil ([1 Corinthians 5:7,8](#)). Unleavened bread, eaten over a period of time symbolized a holy walk with the Lord. In the New Testament, the unleavened bread is the body of our Lord ([John 6:33](#)). The piece of bread, Jewish matzo, used by the Jews during this week of Unleavened Bread was striped (just like Jesus' body, [Isaiah 53](#)). The Passover ceremony of breaking and burying and then resurrecting a piece of this bread presents the Gospel in the midst of the modern Jewish Passover celebration.

God performed this exact ceremony with [the burial of Jesus](#) (1) on the exact day of the feast. Men have speculated how Jesus died so quickly on the cross. Crucifixion normally took three days but Jesus died in 6 hours. Our Lord

died in time to be buried at sundown that day. He was placed on the cross at 9:00 a.m. and taken down at 3:00 p.m. There was time enough to wrap the body and bury it at sundown. Jesus said that no one could take His life from Him - "I lay it down and I take it up again." ([John 10:17,18](#))

III. The feast of FIRST FRUITS ([Leviticus 23:10,11](#))

Held on the Sunday following Unleavened Bread. God wanted a special feast during which the Jews would acknowledge the fertility of the fine land He gave them. They were to bring the early crops of their spring planting (first fruits) to the priest at the Temple to be waved before the Lord on their behalf. This was to be done "the morrow after the Sabbath" or Sunday. Since the feast of Unleavened Bread was seven days long, one of those days would be a Sunday. We have come to call this feast Easter after the Babylonian goddess, Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. But the celebration was to be over God's replanting of the earth in the spring. We miss an important truth by not using the term "First Fruits" because "first" implies a second, third, etc... We celebrate the resurrection of the Lord as First Fruit ([1 Corinthians 15:20,23](#)) and the resurrection of the rest of us [as we each follow Him](#) (1) in our own time to Heaven ([1 Thessalonians 4:16,17](#)).

Jesus celebrated the Sunday of the week of His crucifixion by [rising from the dead](#) (1). It was not some other day He chose but the very day of First Fruits. First Fruits was the last of the feasts that the Lord was seen personally fulfilling on earth. But His ministry to the Church was to go on of course, in the feasts to follow, each on their appropriate days.

IV. The feast of PENTECOST ([Leviticus 23:17](#))

God gave very specific directions for counting the proper number of days until the Feast of Harvest, which we refer to as Pentecost. It was to take place exactly 50 days after First Fruits (usually late May or early June). It actually marked the summer harvest. Here two "wave loaves" of equal weight were baked with leaven, representing sinful man and called "firstfruits" thereby representing redeemed or resurrected men. God was predicting that the Church would be comprised of two parts, Jew and Gentile.

Jesus rejoined His disciples after His resurrection and taught them for forty days. Then He told them to wait at Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit would come. [And He did](#) (1), exactly on the day of the feast ([Acts 1:3](#)). It was a great "harvest" of souls as 3000 people joined in that day ([Acts 2:1](#). [Exodus 32:28](#)). Of course that is only a token of the harvest that will occur at the rapture of the church.

Four coincidences are hard to explain away, especially when each one is so completely appropriate to its purpose. Because we have not yet seen the fulfillment to feast number five, we remain under the orders of Pentecost,

continuing the summer crop cultivation, as we work in the field until the great harvest marked by the next feast.

V. The feast of TRUMPETS ([Leviticus 23:24](#))

In the seventh month (usually in September), on the first day of the month, they had a memorial of blowing of trumpets. This jump in time from the last feast represents the Church Age, since the trumpet represents [the Rapture of the Church](#) (1) ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:51,52](#)).

The trumpet blowing was a signal for the field workers to stop harvesting and [leave immediately](#) (1) for worship at the Temple. Imagine a Jew and Arab working side by side in the field. The Jew would leave and the Arab would stay. "Where there are two working in a field, one will be taken and the other left." ([Matthew 24:40](#))

VI. The feast of ATONEMENT ([Leviticus 23:27](#))

On the Day of Atonement, the Jew either lived or died. The High Priest of Israel entered the Holy of Holies to make a sacrifice on behalf of himself and Israel. If the Jew did not strictly follow the law of [Leviticus 23:28-30](#) and [Leviticus 23:32](#), [he could be cut off](#) (1) from his people. For that 24 hour period he was to do no work, but rather was to use the time for confessing his sins of the entire year. We might even balk at the idea of merely staying awake for 24 hours, but if our salvation hung in the balance, we would try to make it.

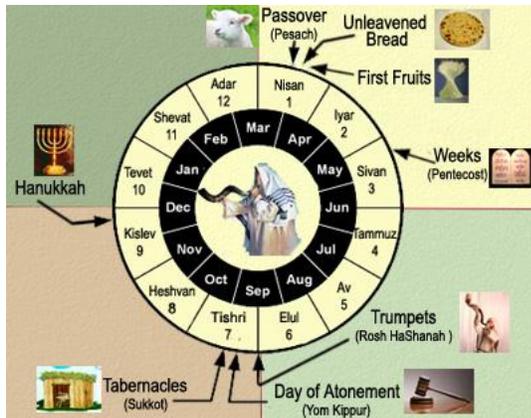
This feast will not be fulfilled by the church, because the church owes no atonement. The church is not innocent of course, but Jesus has paid the price for our sins.

The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled for the Jews when the [Lord returns at His second coming](#) (1) ([Zechariah 12:10](#). [Romans 11:1-6;25-36](#)). (2)

VII. The feast of TABERNACLES ([Leviticus 23:34](#))

This is God's celebration of the fact that He provided shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness. Each year on Tabernacles, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, devout Jews build little shelters outside their houses, and worship in them.

God's great Tabernacle will exist in Jerusalem during the Kingdom Age ([Zechariah 14:16-19](#)). All the world will come every year to appear before the King and [worship Him](#) (1) ([Ezekiel 37:26,27](#). [Micah 4:1-7](#)).



Sometimes Christians think that all the Jews will be saved anyway, so why should we bother witnessing to them now? Since only surviving Israel will be saved when the Lord returns, a man who dies now before being saved, Jew or Gentile, cannot obtain salvation in the future, and we should note that it will be very difficult for Israel to survive the tribulation in any great numbers. The prophets lament that two-thirds of that nation shall perish at the hands of the Antichrist.

- Adapted from "THE SEVEN FEASTS OF ISRAEL" By Zola Levitt.

Question: "How did Jesus fulfill the meanings of the Jewish feasts?"

Answer: The way in which Jesus fulfilled the Jewish feasts is a fascinating study. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish prophet Amos records that God declared He would do nothing without first revealing it to His servants, the prophets (Amos 3:7). From the Old Covenant to the New, Genesis to Revelation, God provides picture after picture of His entire plan for mankind and one of the most startling prophetic pictures is outlined for us in the Jewish feasts of Leviticus 23.

The Hebrew word for "feasts" (*moadim*) literally means "appointed times." God has carefully planned and orchestrated the timing and sequence of each of these seven feasts to reveal to us a special story. The seven annual feasts of Israel were spread over seven months of the

Jewish calendar, at set times appointed by God. They are still celebrated by observant Jews today. But for both Jews and non-Jews who have placed their faith in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, these special days demonstrate the work of redemption through God's Son.

The first four of the seven feasts occur during the springtime (Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Weeks), and they all have already been fulfilled by Christ in the New Testament. The final three holidays (Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles) occur during the fall, all within a short fifteen-day period.

Many Bible scholars and commentators believe that these fall feasts have not yet been fulfilled by Jesus. However, the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13) for all believers in Jesus Christ is that they most assuredly will be fulfilled. As the four spring feasts were fulfilled literally and right on the actual feast day in connection with Christ's first coming, these three fall feasts, it is believed by many, will likewise be fulfilled literally in connection to the Lord's second coming.

In a nutshell, here is the prophetic significance of each of the seven Levitical feasts of Israel:

1) Passover (Leviticus 23:5) – Pointed to the Messiah as our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7) whose blood would be shed for our sins. Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover at the same hour that the lambs were being slaughtered for the Passover meal that evening (John 19:14).

2) Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6) – Pointed to the Messiah's sinless life (as leaven is a picture of sin in the Bible), making Him the perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' body was in the grave during the first days of this feast, like a kernel of wheat planted and waiting to burst forth as the bread of life.

3) First Fruits (Leviticus 23:10) – Pointed to the Messiah's resurrection as the first fruits of the righteous. Jesus was resurrected on this very day, which is one of the reasons that Paul refers to him in 1 Corinthians 15:20 as the "first fruits from the dead."

4) Weeks or Pentecost (Leviticus 23:16) – Occurred fifty days after the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and pointed to the great harvest of souls and the gift of the Holy Spirit for both Jew and Gentile, who would be brought into the kingdom of God during the Church Age (see Acts 2). The Church was actually established on this day when God poured out His Holy Spirit and 3,000 Jews responded to Peter's great sermon and his first proclamation of the gospel.

5) Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24) – The first of the fall feasts. Many believe this day points to the Rapture of the Church when the Messiah Jesus will appear in the heavens as He comes for His bride, the Church. The Rapture is always associated in Scripture with the blowing of a loud trumpet (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:52).

6) Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27) – Many believe this prophetically points to the day of the Second Coming of Jesus when He will return to earth. That will be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish remnant when they "look upon Him whom they have pierced," repent of their sins, and receive Him as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10 and Romans 11:1-6, 25-36).

7) Tabernacles or Booths (Leviticus 23:34) – Many scholars believe that this feast day points to the Lord's promise that He will once again "tabernacle" with His people when He returns to reign over all the world (Micah 4:1-7).

Should Christians celebrate these Levitical feast days of Israel today? Whether or not a Christian celebrates the Jewish feast days would be a matter of conscience for the individual Christian. Colossians 2:16-17 tells us, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ." Christians are not bound to observe the Jewish feasts the way an Old Testament Jew was, but we should not criticize another believer who does or does not observe these special days and feasts (Romans 14:5).

While it is not required for Christians to celebrate the Jewish feast days, it is beneficial to study them. Certainly, it could be beneficial to celebrate these days if it leads one to a greater understanding and appreciation for Christ's death and resurrection and the future promise of His coming. As Christians, if we choose to celebrate these special days, we should put Christ in the center of the celebration, as the One who came to fulfill the prophetic significance of each of them.



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Mo'edim Simplified

The Jewish Holidays - A Simplified Overview of the Feasts of the LORD

These are the set times of the LORD, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed time. - Leviticus 23:4

LEVITICUS 23 is the single chapter of the entire Tanakh that sums up everything. God's eternal plan -- from chaos to eternity -- is ingeniously revealed through the nature and timing of the Seven annual Feasts of the LORD. In less than seven minutes, you will come to realize that the entire human race now exists between two of these feasts. Let us survey God's calendar in its essence.

Sacrifice is the major feature of the feasts. Believers in Mashiach are not responsible to keep these feasts, but knowledge of them enhances our faith. Our Lord kept every one of them without fail, even celebrating Pesach on His last earthly night. Now I will tell you what the feasts are called, when they happen and why they remain significant.

It was on Mount Sinai that God gave Moses the dates and observances of the seven feasts. Here are their names:

1. Passover (Pesach) - Nisan 14
2. Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi) - Nisan 15-22
3. First Fruits (Yom habikkurim) - Nisan 16
4. Pentecost (Shavu'ot) - Sivan 6
5. Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah) - Tishri 1
6. Atonement (Yom Kippur) - Tishri 10
7. Tabernacles (Sukkot) - Tishri 15

When do they happen? God's calendar is based on the phases of the moon. Each month in a lunar calendar begins with a new moon. Pesach falls on the first full moon of Spring. The first three feasts, Pesach, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits fall in March and April. The fourth one, Shavu'ot, marked the summer harvest and occurs in late May or early June. The last three feasts, Trumpets, Yom Kippur and Sukkot happen in September and October.



אֱלֹהֵינוּ מוֹעֲדֵי יְהוָה נִקְרָאִי קֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר־תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם בְּמוֹעֲדָם:

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The Spring Feasts

1. Passover (Pesach). Leviticus 23:5 specifies that the festival year begins with Passover on “the fourteenth day of the first month” (Nisan 15). Passover is the Feast of Salvation. In both testaments, the blood of the Lamb delivers from slavery – the Jew from Egypt, the Christian from sin. Think about the tenth plague in Exodus 12:5 when Egypt's first born sons died while the angel of death “passed over” the Jewish homes with the blood of the lamb on their door

posts. In the B'rit Chadashah, Jesus serves as the sacrificial lamb. It is no coincidence that our Lord Himself was sacrificed on Passover. In Egypt the Jew marked his house with the blood of the lamb. Today the Christian marks his house – his body, “the house of the spirit” with the blood of Christ. Passover, then, represents our salvation.



2. Unleavened Bread (Chag HaMotzi). Leviticus 23:6 puts the second feast on the next night: “On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread unto the Lord; seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.” Leaven or yeast in the Bible symbolized sin and evil. Unleavened bread, eaten over a period of time, symbolized a holy walk, as with the Lord. Unleavened bread, in the B'rit Chadashah [New Testament] is, of course, the body of our Lord. He is described as “the Bread of Life” (Lechem haChayim). He was born in Bethlehem, which, in Hebrew, means, “House of Bread” (Bet Lechem).

Look at the matzah and see that it is striped: “By His stripes we are healed”; pierced: “They shall look upon me whom they’ve pierced,” and pure, without any leaven, as His body was without any sin. And the Passover custom of burying, hiding and then resurrecting the second of three pieces of matzot (the middle piece), presents the Gospel (Afikomen).



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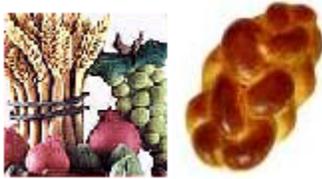
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3. First Fruits (Yom Habikkurim). “On the morrow after the Sabbath” following Unleavened Bread, [Leviticus 23:11](#) schedules First Fruits, the feast for acknowledging the fertility of the land He gave the Israelites. They were to bring the early crops of their spring planting and “wave the sheaf before the Lord.” The modern church has come to call this feast “Easter,” named after Ishtar, the pagan goddess of fertility. We continue to revere objects of fertility such as the rabbit and the egg, but the First Fruits celebration was to be over God’s replanting of the earth in the spring. Today this feast celebrates the resurrection of the Lord on First Fruits, which indeed occurred (plus, eventually, the resurrection of the entire Church!)
 4. Pentecost (Shavu’ot). [Leviticus 23:16](#) says, “Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.” In late May or early June, Shavu’ot marked the summer harvest. [Leviticus 23:17](#) requires an offering of two loaves of bread, baked with leaven. These loaves symbolize the church being comprised of both Jew and Gentile.

A review of the first four feasts reveals that Yeshua was crucified on Pesach, buried on Unleavened Bread, raised on First Fruits and sent the Ruach Hakkodesh on Shavu’ot. Because we have not yet seen the fulfillment of feast number five - Trumpets - we remain under the orders of Shavu’ot.



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The Fall Feasts

5. Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah). Ever since Isaac was spared by virtue of the ram being caught in the thicket by its horn, God seems to have enjoyed the trumpet. He used it when Joshua conquered Jericho. In Leviticus 25:8-10, he specified its use in having trumpets “proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (that quotation appears today on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, assuring us that America was founded by Bible readers). Leviticus 23:24 requires that, “in the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets.”

The Feast of Trumpets occurs in September. This jump in time from the Feast of Pentecost in May or June seems to represent the Church Age in God's planning, since the trumpet unquestionably represents the Rapture of the Church. The trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the Temple. The high priest actually blew the trumpet so that the faithful would stop harvesting to worship. Now, when the trumpet sounds in accordance with 1 Corinthians 15:51- 3, living believers will cease their harvest and rise from the earth. The Church will be taken out of the world.

6. Atonement (Yom Kippur). Leviticus 23:27 provides a day of confession, the highest of holy days. “Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a Day of Atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.” This is the one feast that is not fulfilled by the church, because the Church owes no atonement. The Church is not innocent, of course, but it is exonerated. The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled in a wonderful way when the Lord returns at His Second Coming.



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7. Tabernacles (Sukkot). Leviticus 23:34 says, “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord.” God wanted to celebrate the fact that He provided shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness. Each year on Tabernacles, devout Jews build little shelters or “booths” (sukkot) outside their houses and worshipped in them. Tabernacles represents the Lord’s shelter in the world to come (olam habah), His great Tabernacle to exist in Jerusalem during the Kingdom Age. The Lord will establish His Tabernacle in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 37:26), and the world will come every year to appear before the King and worship Him (Zechariah 14:16-17).

Chanukah, by the way, was not given by God on Mount Sinai, but was prophesied in Daniel 8:9-14, and took place in 165 BCE when the Temple was rededicated. Now you probably agree that Christianity’s Jewish roots offer an eye to the future as well as the past. The next time someone mentions “The Seven Feasts of Israel,” you’ll realize they’re really talking about the Seven Feasts of all time!



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SABBATH: Holy Day or Holiday?

Leviticus 23:1-3

IT MAY BE SURPRISING TO OUR EARS to think of *holy day* and *holiday* in the same way. But the origin of the word *holiday* was *holy* plus *day*. Originally *holiday* had the idea of a sacred religious feast or the meaning of a day of recreation. The idea of a day spent free from work came to dominate and is the general meaning we think of today. In Britain the expression *go on holiday* means that someone is, as we Americans say, going on vacation.

Which of these two words better describes our attitude toward Sunday? Is Sunday a holy day or a holiday? Some may remember the blue laws that were a common part of American and Canadian culture until the latter half of the twentieth century. A blue law was a legislative

enactment that prohibited selling merchandise other than basic human necessities on Sundays. I remember as a youngster going into a local pharmacy that had covered aisles of restricted products that could not be purchased on Sundays. All or at least most of that tradition has disappeared from our cultural practices. The purpose of the blue laws was to encourage worship and rest on Sundays. Later in life when I moved from the South to the Midwest I was struck by how all the major shopping venues were open to customers on Sunday. There were no blue laws, and commerce flowed on Sunday as any other day, perhaps more so. A more striking cultural difference is Sundays in Middle Eastern countries in which the major day of worship is Friday or Saturday (i.e., the Sabbath). Sunday is just another typical work week day.

I am not leading up to a debate over the morality of the blue laws or calling for their reinstatement. **What the trend tells me is that the traditional day set aside for worship is more and more treated as any other day. How does this trend impact the church's attitude toward Sunday?** Your attitude toward Sunday worship? Sunday, of course, has hardly been tossed aside as the primary day for worship in America, since more people attend worship services on Sundays than sporting events on Sundays. **The question for the church today is not what to do or what not to do on Sundays so much as it is to rediscover the significance of a gathered body of believers who set aside special times for worship. The Lord instructed the Israelites to observe special days and celebratory feasts as days of worship. The early church followed a similar pattern that recognized certain days for special times of worship.**

Leviticus 23 offers a summary of the chief celebrations set aside for worship. These are identified as "appointed feasts of the LORD" (vv. 2, 4, 37) and "holy convocations" (vv. 2, 4, 37) because they are days committed to meet with God, the Holy One of Israel. Five feasts are listed, each introduced by the same phrase that identifies the source of the instructions: "The LORD spoke to Moses" (vv. 1, 9, 23, 26, 33). But the mainstay of Israel's worship was the weekly Sabbath day, as

stated near the beginning of the chapter. This day of worship was fundamental to the five calendrical feasts and for that matter to all of Israel's worship. The Sabbath was "the archetypal holy day." For this reason we will now focus on the call to observe the Sabbath in [verses 2-4](#) and will examine the remainder of the chapter in our next study.

The Lord's Feasts (23:2, 4)

[Verses 2](#) and [4](#) announce the sacred nature of the convocations. Three descriptions mark the feasts as especially given by God. They are identified as "the appointed feasts of the LORD," "holy convocations," and "my [that is, the Lord's] appointed feasts." **The repetition shows us that the importance of the feasts was their relationship to God** as their source and designer. **This was true of the Sabbaths, too, since the Bible refers to them as "my [that is, the Lord's] Sabbaths." The Lord instructed Moses "above all" to observe "my Sabbaths" because they were "a sign between me and you... that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you"** ([Exodus 31:13](#); cf. [Leviticus 19:3, 30; 26:2](#)).

The Sabbaths and the feasts were not the property of the Israelites to do with as they wished.

The Scriptures rarely speak of "your Sabbath(s)," referring to the people of Israel ([Leviticus 23:32; 26:35](#)). It is "my Sabbaths," referring to the Lord as the author of the times of worship. The convocations were focused on the worship of God—they are his special times. The convocations were not solely fastidious formalities for their own sake or pomp and ceremony for priestly self-interests. Since they belonged to the Lord and were given for the chief purpose of knowing God, they were deemed "holy." **The convocations were called "holy" because they were consecrated to the Lord's service. They were not family or community potlucks with a bit of religion thrown into the mix. They were celebratory remembrances of their God that called for the people to consecrate themselves to the holy task of worshipping the Lord.**

Yes, worship was an assignment for God's people to obey, as it is for us as his Church. The community at worship, both during the regular cycle of gatherings and during special seasons of the sacred year, is a holy task that demands all that we are and the best of what we are.

Hebrews 10:24, 25 exhorts us *"to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together."*

Sabbath Rest (23:3)

The Sabbath convocation was the sign of the covenant between God and the people of Israel as his community of covenant people ([Exodus 31:13, 17](#); [Ezekiel 20:12, 20](#)). **The failure to observe the Sabbath was a frontal attack on the rule of God in a person's life.** The importance of the Sabbath and the feast days in the sacred calendar can be more fully grasped when we **recall the meaning of the word "appointed," occurring six times in this chapter (vv. 2 [2x], 4 [2x], 37, 44).** **The word translated "appointed" is related to the word for "congregation" with the understanding that the congregation came together at an appointed place and appointed time. It is a gathering. Who made the appointment? These are sacred days for meetings prearranged by God. In other words, God established meetings with his people who were obligated to attend.** We might liken this with our modern day planners. We record meetings that a family head or employer has called. Based on family kinships, community commitments, and employment we have explicitly or implicitly agreed to be a part of assigned gatherings. When a meeting time is announced at the church, business, or family occasion, we attend if we take seriously our participation in the group's identity.

When we skip out on a business meeting, sales meeting, or civic meeting, we in effect send a message, saying, "I don't care enough to

be a part." Since God calls his people to meet him, and they have agreed to attend by virtue of their covenant membership, their failing to do so can only be understood as a rebellious act.

The term "appointed" also refers to an appointed place. The place of meeting had also already been established. It was the Tent of Meeting, the sanctuary structure, where, the Lord says, "I will meet with you" (e.g., [Exodus 29:42, 43](#)). **As the Tent of Meeting was the epicenter of their lives in terms of space, the Sabbath was the focal point of their lives in terms of time.** By epicenter we mean that the Tent of Meeting where the people encountered the Lord through worship was the centerpiece of the tribal occupation of the land. Wherever the Tent of Meeting was erected, in the wilderness or in the land, it stood as the chief emblem of God's presence. When a person wanted to meet with God, the first place he or she thought of was the Lord's residence, the sanctuary. Here was his symbolic resting place where he was to be worshipped and served. The Sabbath was of equal importance in the consciousness of the people. It was vital because the people's routine lives were ordered by the recurring Sabbath each week of the year. As we think of our high noon and midnight hour as signals of the momentous and ominous times of our lives, **every seventh day without exception reminded the people that they were the covenant people of God.**

The most obvious indication of the distinctiveness of the Sabbath was the cessation of daily activities. Ordinary life came to a screeching halt. Life in its richest expression could be enjoyed without the distractions of daily labor. This feature of worship occurs also at special high festival seasons. "You shall not do any ordinary work" appears in five verses in our chapter ([vv. 7, 8, 21, 25, 35](#)).

The idea of "rest" is emphasized in [verse 3](#) by the phrase "solemn rest." The language literally reads, "a sabbath of sabbath observance."

This expression emphasized the importance of the Sabbath. The particular language occurring here is rare. In addition to naming the weekly Sabbath rest (Exodus 31:15; 35:2), this phrase describes two other special times. It depicts the Day of Atonement, which occurs in the seventh month, that is, the Sabbath month (Leviticus 16:31; 23:32). It also describes the sabbatical year when cultivation of the land was prohibited each seventh year (Leviticus 25:4). And the number seven occurs in the calculation of the Year of Jubilee, the fiftieth year after seven Sabbaths of years, equaling forty-nine years (Leviticus 25:8-10). There is a link between the seventh day, the seventh month, and the seventh year, giving the people a sense of symmetry and wholeness in their worship of God throughout their lives.

Why is the number seven and multiples of seven so key to calculating sacred periods of worship? **The number seven in the Bible is the number of perfection and symbolizes perfection.** This is the appropriate number for the worship of God who alone is complete in his perfections. This helps us understand why the instructions for worship required such exacting obligations in order to be acceptable worship in God's eyes. Deviation from the sacred times or from the ritual procedures compromised the holiness of the worship offered to the Lord. Sometimes severe penalties were called for in the case of flagrant transgressions. For example, **the penalty in the Mosaic law for working on the Sabbath was death** (Exodus 31:14-16; 35:2). There is an incident in the book of Numbers that reports that a man who broke Sabbath by gathering sticks was executed by stoning by the community (15:32-36). **The specifics of what constituted crimes against the Sabbath are not detailed in the Bible. The elaborate "do's and don'ts" that governed the Sabbath in later Judaism came from the Jewish rabbis who added to the laws to supply or explain what was not in the Biblical teaching.**

All attention was directed toward the Giver of the Sabbath. It was the day of focused worship when all members of the community devoted

themselves to this one mind. The seventh day involved a Sabbath rest for the community, and all were to participate, including the livestock, which were given rest from their chores. The cessation of work was a blessing from God because the people could enjoy the abundance that God had given them and they could reconnect their daily lives with the Lord as their Covenant-Master.

It stressed the sense of community that the covenant promises from God had created.

As a day of rest from their daily occupations—whether in the fields, the home, or the marketplace—the Sabbath was a benevolent relief from the toils of daily work. It was therefore a harbinger of the future rest that God had promised those who were members of the covenant community of faith.

Sabbath was a present hope for a better future.

The writer to the Hebrews recognized that the saints of the Old Testament had entered into the land of Canaan and had successfully controlled their enemies, but they never received the final, complete rest in the land. The author of Hebrews concludes, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his" (4:9, 10). This rest is available to those today who place their faith in the Lord. It is received in its full measure at the resurrection when "the mortal [body] puts on immortality" ([1 Corinthians 15:54](#)).

We as human beings living in a sinful world face the realities of our decaying bodies as we age and the overwhelming pressures of a modern society that idolizes work's productivity. The internal anguish of the human soul is described by [Ecclesiastes 2:22, 23](#): "What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity." The popularity of self-help books and the new trend in spirituality in modern conversation

reflect this torture of the soul and the sought-after relief that the human spirit desires. The popular Chicken Soup for the Soul series was first published in 1993. "In 2008, Chicken Soup for the Soul became the best-selling trade paperback series in the history of publishing." These heartwarming anecdotes for inspiration and motivation are the best remedy that human ingenuity and imagination can prescribe. But the final, satisfying peace that the human soul yearns for can be only found in the rest that Jesus offers: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29).

Sabbath Celebrations

The observance of Sabbath communicated the need for spiritual rest but also remembered two momentous events in the religious life of Israel. The first was the creation of the world when God ceased from his creation work on the seventh day. The second was the redemption of Israel when the Lord freed the Hebrews from their Egyptian overlords. The significance of the Lord as Creator and Redeemer was the foreshadowing of the new creation and eternal rest that the Lord Jesus has achieved in behalf of the church.

Creation and redemption. The seventh day of the creation week, that is, the Sabbath day, was the chief day of creation's days ([Exodus 20:8-11](#), "Remember the Sabbath..."). It was the day of acclamation by God that the creation had been completed in all its perfections. It is the only day of the week that the creation account in Genesis says was "holy" ([Genesis 2:1-3](#)). The seventh day was holy because it was the day of the week set aside for the recognition of God as the Creator and Provider of all that exists and is enjoyed by his creatures.

Repeatedly in the sacred calendar of [Leviticus 23](#) with its set times of the year, month, and days, there is reference to the Sabbaths as the point of orientation for calculating the sacred times. For example,

the timetable for the Feast of Weeks is determined by counting seven full weeks from the Sabbath that concludes the Feast of Firstfruits ([v. 16](#)). Sevens and multiples of seven characterize the timetable for the seasons of worship. Although the feast days were calculated by movements of the sun, moon, and stars (cf. [Genesis 1:14](#)), the Sabbath never was. The Sabbath day was counted every seven days without reference to astronomical movements. This showed that Israel's God was the Lord of time as well as of space. The psalmist could declare to the Lord, "My times are in your hand" ([31:15a](#)).

The second event tied to the celebration of Sabbath was the great redemption at the Red Sea when Israel was liberated from Egyptian bondage ([Deuteronomy 5:15](#)). Together the Sabbath remembered these two features of God's grace as Creator and Redeemer. When the Israelites paused each week to remember the Lord, they were declaring his role and rights as Creator and Redeemer of his people. Moreover, the linkage with creation indicated that Sabbath rest was a gift for all creation, a universal gift enjoyed by all. This means that the Sabbath event in the life of Israel was not a mere cultural phenomenon, since it was tied to the universal setting of the cosmos.

Sabbath was unique to Israel, not practiced by any other ancient people. It was a weekly renewal of Israel's identity as the people of God whose task was to worship the one true God and to declare his righteousness to the nations.

Sabbath was a day of joyous celebration.

It was not a private experience but a public proclamation. [Verse 2](#) reads, "*you [the people] shall proclaim...*" Convocations on the Sabbath entailed proclamation. The convocations announced the reign of God as Creator and Redeemer, and by the people's

attendance and triumphal praise they showed their recognition of his lordship over their lives.

Eternal rest. The expression "Sabbath of solemn rest" in [verse 3](#) invites us to consider how this "solemn rest" might be entered. Those who were members of the covenant community and those who were aliens in the land enjoyed this time of refreshment by virtue of Israel's relationship to God as Creator and Redeemer ([Exodus 23:12](#)). **The Sabbath as the chief sign of covenant loyalty to the Lord God of Israel was the magnet that would attract all nations to the house of the Lord.** As the Jewish people returned from their captivity to the holy hill of Jerusalem, the nations would join them in offering obeisance, including the keeping of the Sabbath. Then, as the prophet Isaiah forecasted, "[the Lord's] house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" ([Isaiah 56:7c](#); cf. [Matthew 21:13](#)). But that solemn rest was never complete, for it was followed by six days of work. **The pattern of work and rest was part of the covenant life of the people.** The writer to the Hebrews recognized, however, that God had provided a permanent rest for those who were consecrated to his service. That eternal rest is a spiritual Sabbath that Jesus has achieved for those who are his people.

This spiritual rest was made known from the moment of the seventh day's dawning at creation. The six days all conclude with the same refrain—"and there was evening and there was morning, the first day," "the second day," and so forth to "the sixth day." But this concluding refrain is absent at the conclusion of the seventh day. Obviously, there was a conclusion to the seventh day since there was an eighth that followed, but there was a spiritual lesson to be learned from the creation chapter regarding the eternity of the seventh day. The writer to the Hebrews acknowledged that there is a

Sabbath rest that continues uninterrupted ([Hebrews 4:10](#)). That rest is provided by the Lord Jesus Christ for those who will enter into it. God the Creator was in Christ reconciling this world unto himself through the incarnational life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus ([2 Corinthians 5:17-20](#)).

The second image of eternal rest is painted by the promise of Canaan's land of rest. After the redemption of Israel, the Lord led his people to the land that would give them rest from their enemies ([Joshua 21:44](#)). But those who refused to enter the land died in the wilderness, short of the promise intended for them. The writer to the Hebrews remembered the failure of Israel and urged his Christian readers not to falter in their faith but rather to trust God to give them an eternal rest ([Hebrews 4:6-9](#)). This is the rest that God has for us now, an eternal rest that is ours through the cross of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures say, "For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" ([Colossians 1:19, 20](#)).

The Lord's Day

What does the Sabbath mean for us since we come together on Sunday, the Lord's Day? The difference between Saturday and Sunday is not a mere historical hiccup, in which the Jews have their special day and we Christians have ours. That we worship on Sunday trumpets a victorious declaration that the Sabbath could not. All four Gospels identify the first day of the week as the day of Jesus' resurrection. Each Gospel notes that it came after the Sabbath evening. By Jesus' resurrection on the "eight day," that is the day after the Sabbath, he inaugurated the eternal rest that is available to any person who will confess his sins and trust in him as the Lord of the new creation. This is the continuation of God's creation rest that has no end. The early church met on this day in the New Testament ([Acts 20:7](#); [1 Corinthians 16:2](#)), and the tradition has

continued to this hour. This is why we refer to Sunday as "the Lord's day," a name given to Sunday by the early Christians as found in the book of Revelation ([1:10](#)). There was a necessary period of transition from the Jewish tradition to the new meaning of the sacred calendar. The earliest Christians were Jewish and continued their worship days. The pattern of special times continued in the church but was infused with new meaning in light of the gospel. Once the old had been filled up by the inauguration of the new covenant, the "symbolic importance" of the holy days no longer continued. The shadows had been superseded by the reality of the reign of Jesus.

We may raise practical questions regarding observance of the Lord's Day and other important sacred seasons, such as Easter. What is required of the Christian today? Are we bound by obligation, as the ancient Israelites were, to attend Sunday services? If our attendance is irregular or absent, what does that say about our Christian profession? Is our claim to be Christians genuine? Is it voided by negligence of church services? Furthermore, how much attendance is enough? Where is the dividing line between success and failure? Also, what kinds of activities are permitted on Sundays? Are we prohibited from commercial activities, such as grocery shopping and visiting retail sites? How about recreation? Afternoon golf? Football on TV? Can "work" for one individual be "rest" for another person?

As in the case of the Sabbath in the Old Testament, there is little direct instruction regarding the specifics of the Lord's Day and how it was observed in the New Testament. We are dependent on inferences from the New Testament and from early church tradition. This suggests that the observance of the Lord's Day will take on a number of different expressions, depending on the culture in which the local church operates.

Although the specifics of the Lord's Day may vary from setting to setting, the one consistent factor is the requirement of believers to gather at appointed times for

the purpose of worship and spiritual edification
([Hebrews 10:24, 25](#)).

It was so common for the church to gather, it is assumed by the Apostle Paul in his instructions regarding the life of Christian believers individually and collectively (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 14:26; Ephesians 5:18-21; Colossians 3:16). It was clearly the practice of the early church as shown by the references to gathered bodies in house churches (Acts 2:41, 42; Philemon 2).

Another consistent teaching on the Lord's Day in the New Testament is the limitation of the value of Sunday observance. Observance of holy days does not gain us saving merit in the eyes of God. By church attendance we do not add to or subtract from the absolute value of the death of Christ and the grace that flows from it ([Galatians 4:9, 10](#); [Colossians 2:16-19](#)). The death of Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit in the lives of believers are based on the righteousness of Christ, not on our religious performance. The Apostle Paul did not condemn the observance of Jewish food laws and of designated holy days, practices that he himself undertook as a Jew. But he did reject the false motivations or conclusions drawn from the keeping of religious rituals that were at odds with the gospel of grace and liberty that he had proclaimed.

Although our salvation is not secured by our religious fastidiousness, our obedience to the Word of God testifies to authentic Christian commitment. Connection with the gathered church is a necessity for Christians for the verification of saving faith. If a person does not connect with a local body of believers, this is good reason for that person to pause and evaluate his faith ([2 Corinthians 13:5](#)).

Such a connection is necessary for the believer's identity with the Church, signaling his or her bond with Christ and the salvation that

he has won for him or her on the cross. It is a necessity for the believer's life in spiritual discipline and growth in spiritual character. To submit to the preaching of God's Word, to join the congregation of the righteous in praise of God, and to be accountable to church leaders and fellow pilgrims is part of the Christian experience. It would have been unthinkable in the early church for a Christian to ignore the gathered body of believers without detriment to that believer's spiritual life. We might compare this to a man or woman who says wedding vows in a formal ceremony but soon thereafter behaves as a single person, not living in the same home and not attending to the commitments spoken at the covenant wedding ceremony. Whether one wears a wedding ring or not, a married person must act like a faithful companion in marriage or the actions of the person make the words of commitment drivel.

Although we have emphasized the importance of Sunday observance as a special day of worship, we do not think it advisable to draw up a detailed list of limitations or liberties on the conduct of Sunday behavior. Once specifics are legislated, there will be the splitting of hairs that create a complex grid of right and wrong behaviors that can be a false substitution for the authentic gospel. Such detailed requirements can prove to be a competitive righteousness that does not have its exclusive origin in the grace provided by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The operating principle should be what we hear from Paul regarding Christian behavior: "... whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

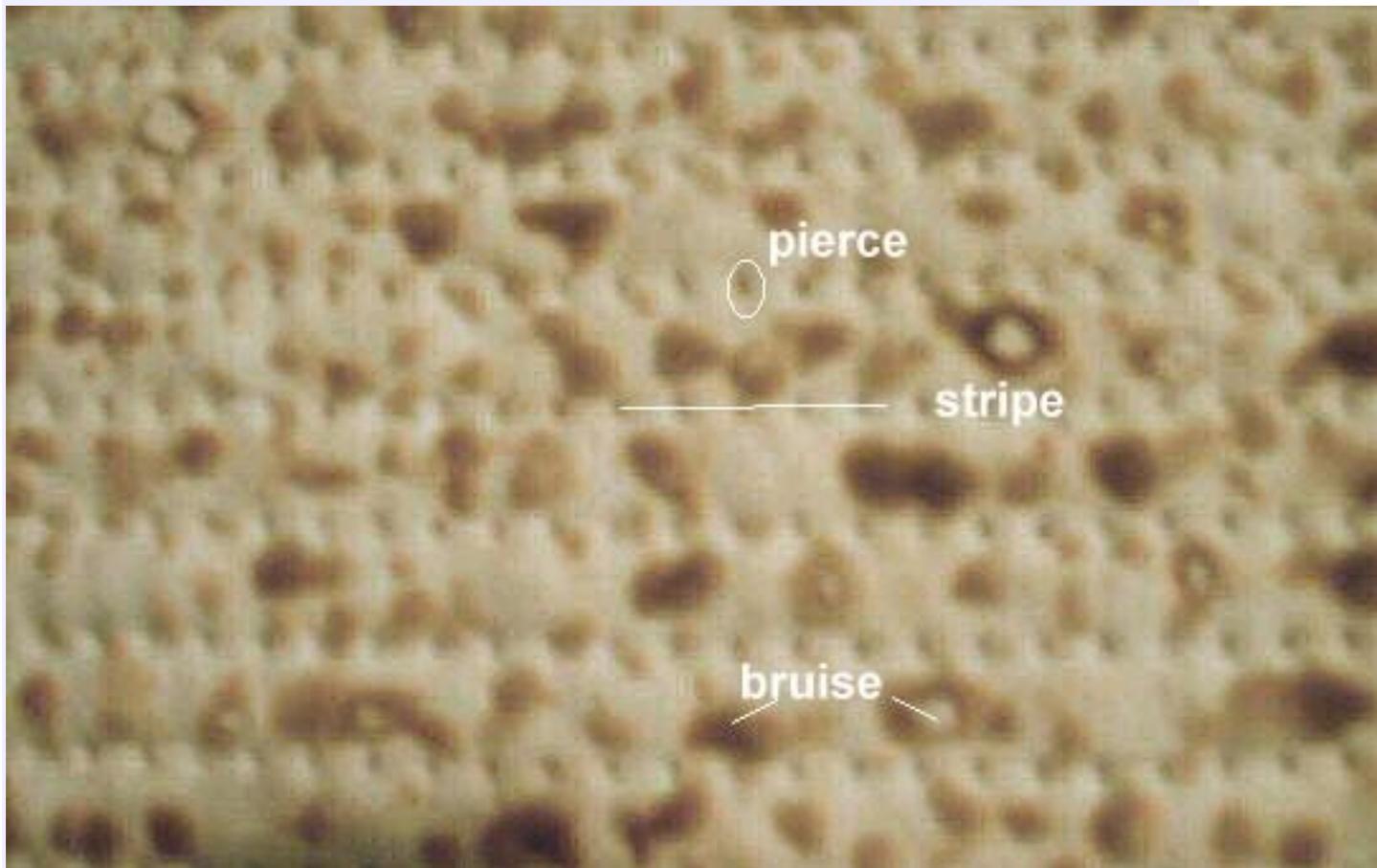
The question we must ask ourselves each day, including each Lord's Day, is, am I honoring the Lord by my conduct today?

So, let us remember that when we come together as the Church of Jesus Christ we are declaring the new day and we are witnesses that we have entered into the new creation—the eternal Sabbath rest—through faith in

the resurrected Christ. **The Christian hymn-writer Henry Ware penned** these words that will prompt us to recall the purpose of our gathering on the Lord's Day: *"Lift your glad voices in triumph on high, for Jesus hath risen, and man cannot die."*

- Preaching the Word – Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People.

Here is a close-up picture of a piece of matzoh. It has a lot of Messianic symbolism, discussed below.



- The Bible tells us nothing about what Yeshua looked like—whether he was short, medium height or tall, whether he was thin, medium build or stocky, whether his face was round, elongated, somewhat angular . . .
- Yeshua described himself as *food* for the *spirit*—John 6:48 "I am the bread of life."
- Realistically, the only portrait we have of Yeshua is in . . . the *matzoh!*
 - Slaves getting ready to leave "at any moment" couldn't wait for dough to rise during baking, so matzoh is made without leaven—which in the Bible is symbolic of sin. Yeshua was sinless.
 - Slaves on the run didn't have time to build ovens, so matzoh is cooked on a grill—which leaves lines . . . stripes.
 - There is only flame on one side, so the cook pierces the dough as it's cooking, for more even heat.
 - Where the flame touches or gets close to the bread it leaves darkened spots that look like bruises.

Isaiah 53:5

But He was **pierced** for our transgressions,
 He was **bruised** for our iniquities;
 The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him,
 And by His **stripes** we are healed.

Mysterious Passover Symbols

by [David Brickner](#) | Apr 1, 2010

Passover is a beautiful, often mysterious, celebration. More than any other festival it has been at the heart of the universal Jewish experience, helping to form the core of spiritual identity and pointing inexorably toward the hope of Israel's salvation. Two especially mysterious items on the Passover table were not part of the original celebration; their names and significance are shrouded in the past. These symbols point to a surprising and intriguing indication of God's supernatural hand in developing the Passover observance through the ages.

The first and best known of these symbols is called the afikomen. According to the late Jewish scholar David Daube and others, *afikomemis* actually a Greek word meaning the coming one” (*habba’* in Hebrew) and is a clear reference to the Messiah.¹

The afikomen is a piece of *matzah*, (unleavened bread) that is broken before the Passover meal. Part of it is wrapped in a cloth and hidden. At the end of the meal it is brought back, distributed to the participants and eaten as the final morsel.

In today’s Jewish celebration, the second or middle of three pieces of unleavened bread is taken from a special bag called the *matzah tosh*. The bread is removed, broken, and the portion that is wrapped in the cloth becomes the afikomen that is then hidden from view.

After dinner, the tradition turns into a fun game for the children who search for the afikomen and are rewarded when they find it. The bread is then broken and distributed among the participants who all eat it together. Does this bring anything to mind?

When Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples in the upper room, He broke the bread we know as the afikomen and distributed it to His disciples saying, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” (1 Corinthians 11:24)

We know that our Messiah’s sinless body was “broken” in death, wrapped in a cloth and hidden as in burial, then brought back; resurrected by the power of God. It is truly a reward to those who find and partake in the life He offers. Yet the amazing parallels we see in the traditions of the afikomen remain hidden to those who reject Jesus claims.

The afikomen was not part of the original Passover described in the book of Exodus. We are often asked when it was introduced to the service; a very good question to which there is no definitive answer. The entire interplay of the afikomen and the *matzah tosh* (which came into use some time after the afikomen) appears so messianic that some skeptical scholars will accuse Jesus or His disciples of inventing symbols and traditions to amplify His claims. But if Jesus or His followers (a minority among Jewish people) fabricated these things, how is it that it is practiced so widely among Jewish people around the world? Or, as David Daube observed, “If there was no previously established symbolism relating

to the unleavened bread, then what were his disciples to make of it when he ‘gave to them and said, “Take, eat, this is my body?”’²

In fact, Jesus’ action and declaration concerning that bread had a historical context.

Rabbi Hillel (who was most active between 30 BC-10AD³) drew special attention to the afikomen as he led people through Passover celebrations. And, in the first century, Rabbi Gamaliel said that the bread pointed to the speed at which salvation came to Israel in Egypt. Further, we know that by the first century, some Jewish people viewed the bread as symbolic of the people of Israel and the hidden piece, the afikomen, as a symbol of the Messiah, who remained hidden from view.⁴ We can’t be certain when the entire afikomen/matzah tosh ceremony was instituted in the Jewish Passover observance; however, we do know there was already messianic significance associated with that bread by the time Jesus made the startling claim that it pointed to Him.

Daube likewise points out the strange reality that while the afikomen ceremony continues to play a prominent role in contemporary Passover *seders* (seder is the word used to refer to the songs, liturgy and celebratory Passover meal), very little effort is made to explain it. **While so many things are explained at length in the Haggadah,⁵ the ceremony of the afikomen is left without interpretation.** It would seem there is a general fear of messianic speculation, or even a more particular wish on the part of Jewish sages to avoid questions about a possible connection to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. (In a similar way, Isaiah 53 is omitted from the cycle of Scripture readings in synagogue.) For those of us who do believe, the tradition of the afikomen confirms the messianic symbolism of the bread that has become part of the church’s observance of the Lord’s Supper.

- Jews For Jesus

The following is a simple seven-step method that I have found helpful for interpreting and applying the law.

First, affirm inspiration and helpfulness. [Second Timothy 3:16](#) says,

Second, affirm fulfillment in Jesus.

The whole Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus, even the legal sections like Leviticus. After the resurrection of Jesus, He met a few of His disciples on the road to Emmaus. He told them that His life, death, and resurrection were prophesied in the Old Testament. He said in Luke 24:44,

Everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

“Everything written about *Me* in the Law of Moses.” The law of Moses, including Leviticus, is somehow about Jesus. Jesus said, “Don’t assume that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17). Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law. How does Jesus fulfill the Law? We’ll see that as we go through Leviticus...

Third, determine what the law/text meant in its original context.

It’s often been said that a text in the Bible cannot mean what it never meant.

Fourth, note the similarities with today’s context. (in principle(s))

Fifth, identify principles that apply to both ancient and modern contexts.

Walter Kaiser refers to this as “principlization” (*Toward an Exegetical Theology*).

Sixth, consider what the New Testament teaches about each principle.

Does the New Testament teach anything, for example, about the separation of God's people from those who don't know and love God? It does. Did Jesus say anything about that? He did, and He fulfills that part of the Law because He lived separate from the sin of the world, He empowers His followers to be different, and He is the difference between His followers and those who don't know and love God.

- Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Leviticus.

Seventh, apply the principle to your life.

The principle is that God wants us to be different from those who don't know Him. I apply that principle by rejecting the sinful practices of the world and separating myself from them and to Jesus.

- **Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary:** Exalting Jesus in Leviticus.