



Messiah in the Law of Moses

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THE SEVEN FEASTS OF THE LORD: *MESSIAH IN THE LAW OF MOSES*

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“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.” Leviticus 23:1-4

Introduction

Leviticus Chapter 23 records seven (7) feasts that the Lord instituted as part of the Law of Moses. There were three (3) feasts instituted in the first month of the Jewish calendar (Nisan): Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits. There were three (3) feasts instituted in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar (Tishri): the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. In the third month (Sivan) there was one (1) feast instituted called Pentecost.



Every Jew understood the importance of observing these seven feasts, and they were made aware of the consequences for those who failed (Leviticus 23:29-30). It is important for us to understand that these feasts foreshadow redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ (Messiah), and they also foreshadow God’s plan for the ages.

The first three (3) feasts foreshadowed the first advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, while the last three (3) feasts foreshadow His future second advent. The fourth feast, Pentecost, foreshadows the dispensation in which we currently live, called the Church Age or Dispensation of Grace. The first three (3) feasts were fulfilled by Messiah’s sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection, and the fourth commenced to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Church was empowered by the Holy Ghost. The Church Age will consummate when the Church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

This event is commonly referred to as the Rapture. The last three (3) feasts foreshadow events yet future. We will examine all seven of the feasts outlined in Leviticus Chapter 23 by looking at three (3) important elements of each: The Pronouncement, The Practice, and The Prophecy. In so doing, we will discuss Scripture references of each feast, discuss practices observed in ancient Israel and modern Judaism, and we will also examine significant prophetic aspects of each feast. It is our desire that through this study, many saints will be encouraged to be greater witnesses of the Light that was sent from Heaven to earth, so that those of earth may come to know the true Light and go to Heaven.

CHAPTER 1

The Feast of Passover

“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’s passover.” Leviticus 23:5



פסח

The Pronouncement

All seven (7) feasts were recorded in one chapter of God’s Word, Leviticus Chapter 23. The Hebrew name for Passover is Pesach which literally means “passing over” or “protection.” This feast is considered a time of beginnings for Israel. It is celebrated in the first month, Nisan, which serves as the beginning of the Jewish religious calendar. Passover represents the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the growing season. In the days of Israel’s Temple, Passover was a reminder of a new lambing time. Most importantly, Passover serves as a memorial of God’s deliverance (or redemption) of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

Several verses are provided to explain the last six feasts, but only one verse was written concerning Passover, the first feast - “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’s Passover” (Leviticus 23:5). Why did God provide only one verse for this feast? The answer is two-fold: Exodus Chapter 12 gives detailed instructions of Passover, and Jews living in the days of Moses had just recently experienced the Passover firsthand in the land of Egypt. No doubt these Jews were familiar with the feast. Let us look at the first Passover as recorded in the Exodus Chapter 12.

After 430 years of slavery, God commissioned Moses (age 80) to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. God commanded Moses to speak unto the children of Israel, “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the

land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the LORD” (Exodus 6:6-8).

Moses repeatedly went before Pharaoh of Egypt and demanded he let God’s people go. Nine times Pharaoh refused, and God sent a plague upon the land of the Egyptians. The word “plague” comes from the Hebrew word “*oth*” which means “*sign*.” The Egyptians believed in magic, and they often tried to override the laws of nature with their magical tricks. God chose to use the laws of nature to prove He is God. After the first nine plagues fell upon the land, God sent Moses once more to confront Pharaoh, and again Pharaoh refused his request. God sent the final tenth plague upon the land – “death upon the firstborn”. It is believed that all ten plagues occurred within an 8-10 month period of time. Each of these plagues served to illustrate the God of Israel was greater than all of the “so-called gods” of Egypt.

Before sending the final judgment upon Egypt, God gave Moses specific instructions how Israel could avoid this “plague of death.” The instructions are recorded in Exodus 12:1-14. Israel was instructed to “take to them every man a lamb” (Exodus 12:3). The lamb should be “without blemish, a male of the first year,” taken “out from the sheep, or from the goats” (Exodus 12:5).

The people were to keep it up until the 14th day of the same month; and then kill it in the evening (Exodus 12:6). After the lamb was slain, they were to “take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it” (Exodus 12:7). They were to roast their lamb with fire and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8). They were to eat the meal with their traveling clothes on and with their staff in their hands (Exodus 12:11).

The LORD then revealed that on this night something remarkable would occur. God said, “For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:12-13). The story of what happened that night can be read in Exodus 12:29-36. The firstborn of all Egyptians, from Pharaoh of Egypt to the lowliest prisoners in the Egyptian dungeons, (even the cattle) suffered the loss of their firstborn. Pharaoh, overcome by grief, ordered Moses and the children of Israel to leave Egypt to serve their God. He told them to take their flocks and herds, and he even asked Moses for a blessing. It is this event that is memorialized in the Passover feast. Exodus 12:14 states, “And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

The Practice

Passover is the arguably the most popular Jewish holiday. Passover is not a feast of the Church, but rather a Jewish memorial (Exodus 12:14). Each year on the 14th day of Nisan (late March or early April) Jews observe Passover with a celebration feast called a Seder. All Jewish Seders are not conducted exactly alike, but certain principles are similar in all movements of Judaism - Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform. Most Jews observe the Fast of the Firstborn, a minor fast for all firstborn males commemorating the firstborn Jewish males in Egypt that were spared. Special food items, traditions, and Scripture readings memorialize the liberation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. All members of the family are actively involved in the memorial. There is no right way or wrong way to conduct a Passover Seder; however, there are certain practices that ought to be observed. During the feast, a recounting of the Exodus story is usually told and prayers of thanksgiving offered.

The word “*Seder*” means, “*order*”, and the Passover Seder follows a designated “script or book,” called a “Haggadah”. The word “Haggadah” is Hebrew for “telling,” and it is followed throughout the Seder. Haggadahs were not used until the eighth century A.D., and it is estimated that there are more than 3,000 different Haggadah versions currently available. Different rabbis have created each of these versions.

A special Seder plate is used for the Passover. Three items of food are placed on the plate: roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. Modern Judaism has substituted a shank bone of a lamb in place of the roasted lamb; horseradish is commonly used for bitter herbs; and matzo is used for unleavened bread. The shank bone symbolizes the lamb eaten by the Israelites in Egypt. The bitter herbs symbolize the bitterness of bondage, and the matzo symbolizes the haste in which they baked bread that first Passover night to both eat and take with them for their journey.

Rabbis have added other food items since the days of Moses. Each of these items symbolizes some aspect of the Jewish Exodus. Modern items include charoset, a mixture of apples, nuts, grape juice, and cinnamon. It symbolizes the mortar used by Jewish slaves to build the Egyptian cities, as well as the sweetness of a better future that lies ahead. A roasted egg is used to symbolize new life. It is believed that this practice had its origin with pagan fertility rituals; so many Jews choose not to use it. Another item is called karpas. Karpas are greens (usually parsley or celery), which symbolize the hyssop (common weed) used to wipe the lamb’s blood upon the doorposts. Karpas are also dipped into salt water and eaten representing the tears of slavery.

An interesting custom practiced by modern Judaism is the pillow. A pillow is provided for the leader to lean upon, and it symbolizes the freedom provided to the Jews. The act of reclining is seen as an act of a “free man.” Slaves never had time for leisure. Because of God’s deliverance, Jews are now free from the bondage of the Egyptians. Before the Passover celebration begins, there are five (5) tasks that must be performed. Jewish parents use these tasks to instruct their children concerning their Jewish heritage. The five tasks performed are as follows:

1.) **Remove all leaven in the home**

All leaven (yeast) must be removed from the home. Pots, pans, skillets, and cooking utensils used to bake foods containing yeast (leaven) are removed from the house. All foods containing leaven are also discarded. Some families maintain two sets of cooking utensils because of this custom. They often loan or sell the set used to cook leaven to their Gentile neighbors, and then retrieve them after Pesach. The term “spring cleaning” originated from this Jewish house cleansing because Passover is celebrated during March or April.

2.) **Set the Passover table**

The family Passover table is set. Passover plates are provided for everyone in attendance. Each plate contains specific items placed on it that will be used in the Seder.

3.) **Search for leaven**

Parents will strategically place up to ten pieces of leaven (crumbled bread) in different rooms of their home. Before the Seder begins, they will take their children on a search for leaven throughout the house. A feather, wooden spoon, candle, and paper bag are used. The candle symbolizes the light of God’s Word that reveals sin in one’s life. When leaven is discovered, the children will use the feather to sweep it into the spoon, and then the spoon is emptied into a paper bag. After all leaven has been found, the feather, spoon, and bag containing the leaven are burned in a fireplace or discarded outside.

4.) **Prayer of nullification**

Once all leaven has been removed from the house, the head of the home offers the prayer of nullification. This prayer indicates that, as far as he knows, his house is free of all leaven and ready to begin celebrating the Passover feast.

5.) **Lighting of the festival candles**

The festival lights (candles) are lit by the woman of the household. Orthodox rabbis contend that there are 3 duties of the Jewish wife – obey her husband; teach her children; and light the festival lights. Rabbis teach that a Jewish woman should light the candles because darkness came into the world by a woman (Eve). According to Torah (Genesis 3:15), a Jewish woman will rekindle the light that was lost by bringing forth the Messiah.



The Passover Seder is divided into four acts or parts. These four parts are designated by Four Cups of wine that are customarily drunk during the Seder. The cups find their origin in relation to the four (4) “I Wills” contained in Exodus 6:6-7. God promised Israel four things He would do, “Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians,

and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exodus 6:6-7).

The Four Cups:

- 1.) **Cup of Sanctification**
- 2.) **Cup of Praise**
- 3.) **Cup of Redemption**
- 4.) **Cup of Communion**



Some rabbis have added a fifth cup, called the “Cup of Elijah.” The custom of filling a cup for the Prophet Elijah at the Seder table is relatively recent. Most Jewish families today set a place at the table for Elijah and pour wine into a goblet called “Elijah’s Cup” to symbolize he would be welcomed as a guest at their Seder. Many teach that Elijah will precede Messiah’s coming. It is thought that Messiah will come during one of the most important feasts of the Lord.



The Cup of Sanctification

In the first act of the Seder, all drink the Cup of Sanctification; eat karpas dipped in salt water to symbolize the tears of Egyptian slavery and eat matzo (unleavened bread). The story of the Exodus is read from the Tanach (Old Testament). He offers a Kiddush (blessing) upon the cup, karpas, and matzo, and all partake of them.

The Cup of Praise

The second cup is poured, but not consumed until later. They will dip their finger into the cup and recount the 10 plagues that befell Egypt in the days of Moses and the Exodus. The leader of the Seder also takes time to explain the Passover elements (lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread). A small child is then selected, and the child will ask the Four Questions:

- 1.) ***“Why is this night different from other nights in that we eat only unleavened bread?”***
- 2.) ***“Why is it that we eat only bitter herbs?”***
- 3.) ***“Why is it on this night we dip twice?”***
- 4.) ***“Why on this night do we all recline?”***

The answers to these questions allow the leader to give instruction about their Jewish heritage and God's deliverance of Israel. A blessing is offered, and all drink the Cup of Sanctification. This part of the observance is followed by a festive meal.

During the second cup, many Jews have a practice that involves three pieces of matzo bread (unleavened bread). These pieces of matzo are contained in a matzo tash (bag) that has three compartments. The leader takes out the second or middle piece of matzo, and holds it up for all to see. He breaks the matzo and places half of it back into the matzo tash. He then wraps the other half, called the "Afikomen," in linen cloth and will hide it later. The term Afikomen means "*dessert or that which is to come.*" During the festive meal that follows, all of the children search for the Afikomen, and the winner is rewarded. The Afikomen is then distributed and all partake of it as their dessert.



The Afikomen

Modern Judaism teaches that the matzo tash represents the three patriarchs of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some rabbis teach that it represents the High Priest, the Levites, and the Israelites. Of course, none of these reasons have a Biblical basis. If you ask most Jews why the custom of the Afikomen is observed, they will likely have no idea. The best explanation for this custom is that it was a tradition started by 1st Century Jewish Christians who made up the vast majority of the New Testament Church. The Afikomen portrays a beautiful portrait of Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah), the 2nd Person of the Godhead. Jesus Christ was broken for us on Calvary, wrapped in linen, and buried in a borrowed tomb. On the third day, He arose from the grave, conquering death and hell! There is great reward for all who find Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. That reward is Eternal Life. Jesus is our Afikomen!

The matzo is dipped into the marror (horseradish; bitter herbs) and eaten. Some Jewish families will also observe the custom of eating a Hillel Sandwich – a combination of matzo, charoset, and marror. A festive meal is eaten after the second cup. During this time, children will search for the Afikomen (called the Tzaphun). After the Afikomen is discovered, all eat the matzo as dessert.

The Cup of Redemption

After the festive meal has been eaten, the Seder continues. A third cup of wine is poured, blessed, and consumed in honor of the great redemption God has promised Israel. Judaism teaches that Israel's consolation will occur when Messiah comes to set up His kingdom. Sadly, they are ignorant of the fact that the "Consolation of Israel" came 2,000 years ago (Luke 2:25-32).

A child opens the door of the house during this cup and looks for the Prophet Elijah. As we have already mentioned, Jews believe Elijah will precede the coming of Messiah, and most Jewish rabbis teach that Messiah will come during Pesach (Passover) or Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The custom reading the Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-118) follows this practice.

The Cup of Communion

The Cup of Communion is the last part of the Passover Seder. This cup celebrates the joy and fellowship that Israel will experience when Messiah comes and establishes His earthly Kingdom. Jews yearn for Messiah to come as a “Conquering King” to deliver them from Gentile oppression. Jesus spoke of this era as the “Times of the Gentiles” (Luke. 21:24). The great tragedy of Judaism is that Jewish people do not realize that JESUS the Messiah has already come (Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 53; John 1:11-12). A Kiddush (blessing) is offered, and all drink the Cup of Communion. The leader reads the Aliyah or Ascent Psalms (Psalms 42:1; 84:1-2; 122:1-2; 133:1; 134:1), and the memorial concludes with singing such songs as “Dayenu” and “Next Year in Jerusalem.” “Dayenu,” one of the most traditional songs, means “It would have been enough!” The words of the song go something like this:

If he had taken us out of Egypt but had not punished them...Dayenu (It would have been enough!)

He killed their firstborn... Dayenu

He split the Red Sea... Dayenu

He allowed us to pass through it... Dayenu

He buried our oppressors... Dayenu

He supplied our needs... Dayenu

He fed us the manna... Dayenu

He brought us to Mount Sinai... Dayenu

He gave us the Torah... Dayenu

He brought us to the Promised Land... Dayenu

He built the Holy Temple for us... Dayenu

The Prophecy

There is much prophecy found in the Passover Seder. God revealed His Sovereign plan of redemption in this one feast. Redemption is possible only by the blood of the Lamb. The Passover lamb was but a foreshadowing of the Lamb of God who was to come. Messiah’s arrival was clearly announced by John the Baptist who cried out from the River Jordan, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jews had been celebrating the Passover feast for 1,500 years. They understood clearly the significance of John’s statement. John plainly declared that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the Messiah!



Paul wrote, “...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Prophet Isaiah prophesied the suffering of Messiah as the Lamb of God. In Isaiah Chapter 53 the prophet wrote, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the

transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isaiah 53:7-10).

According to Exodus Chapter 12, there were 3 important days in connection with Passover - 1st month; 10th day; 14th day (Exodus 12:2-3; 6). The Feast of Passover is observed in the 1st month (Nisan) of the Jewish religious calendar. They were instructed to choose a lamb on the 10th day of Nisan and observe it for four days. On the 14th day of Nisan they were to kill the lamb, smear its blood on their doorposts, roast it, and eat it. Passover is always celebrated in late March or early April.

In ancient Israel, on the 10th day of Nisan, the High Priest would choose a lamb, lead it into Jerusalem, while crowds of worshippers lined the streets waving palm branches and singing Psalm 118 - “Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD.” Messiah entered into Jerusalem on the same 10th day of Nisan nearly 2,000 years ago. In fulfillment of prophecy He entered the city riding on the foal of an ass. Most likely Jesus followed right behind the High Priest and his little Passover lamb. The crowds that just heralded the sacrificial lamb led by the High Priest now heralded the Lamb of God - Messiah! Jesus identified Himself with the Passover sacrifice by fulfilling precise the Messianic prophecy on this occasion (John 12:9-19).



There are 3 specific references to the Passover lamb – a lamb; the lamb; your lamb (Exodus 12:3-5). It matters what individuals think of Jesus Christ - “The Lamb of God.” Many simply believe He was “a” good man, but nothing more. Many believe He was “the” prophet of God, but this is not enough to save one’s soul. Unless He is personalized by faith as “your” Lamb, He is of no efficacy to you. Salvation is as personal as was the paschal lamb in the days of Moses, “...they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house... every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb” (Exodus 12:3-4).

Notice also that there are 3 characteristics of the Lamb mentioned in Exodus 12:5-6. The lamb must be spotless; select; and sacrificed. Not just any lamb would do! The lamb had to be a “spotless lamb” - “without blemish” (Exodus 12:5). Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was without sin. Peter declares we are saved by “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19).

The lamb had to be a “select lamb” - “a male of the first year: taken out from the sheep or goats” (Exodus 12:5). Only Yeshua (Jesus) was qualified to be our Redeemer, to be the “propitiation” for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2). Just as important, the lamb had to be a “sacrificial lamb” - “The congregation of Israel shall kill it” (Exodus 12:6). Under the Law, redemption was only possible by the blood. Leviticus 17:11 declares, “...for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” The same is true today - “...without the shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

The Passover lamb is a portrait of the “Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Jesus observed the Passover meal with His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion. After the meal, He led His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane where He would later be arrested (John 18:1). In the garden, Jesus wrestled and agonized in prayer because He knew what would occur shortly thereafter. Luke 22:44 reveals the only time that the word “agony” is used in the King James Version of the Bible, “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

This word literally means to be “engaged in combat”. Jesus was 100% God, but He was also 100% human – God incarnate. There is a medical condition called hemohidrosis or hematidrosis that has been found in patients suffering from extreme stress or shock. The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and literally leak blood in the sweat. There are documented cases that reveal how some people have died under extreme stress because of this medical condition. One such case involved a nun who, as she was threatened with death by the swords of enemy soldiers, “was so terrified that she bled from every part of her body and died of hemorrhage in the sight of her assailants.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ knew the agony of spiritual combat. He knew the pain of anguishing in the flesh. Mark 14:34 reveals, “And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.” It is impossible for us to comprehend the agony, sorrow, and pain that Jesus suffered for us even before Calvary. However, we do know that Messiah died just as thousands upon thousands of lambs had died under the Law. Not one bone of a sacrificial lamb was broken (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12), and not a single bone of Messiah was broken that dreadful day.



During the Passover, a sign was hung about the neck of each lamb bearing the name of its owner. When Jesus was crucified, a sign was hung above His head bearing the name of His Father. It is possible that the sign written over Jesus’ head was the Hebrew Tetragrammaton, YHWH. Messages were commonly abbreviated by writing the first letter of each word. In the case of this particular sign, “Jesus of Nazareth and King of the Jews”, was written in three different languages. The Hebrew initials for the title

inscribed would have been YHWH; the same letters used in Hebrew for “Jehovah” - the God of Israel. This is possibly the reason why Jewish religious leaders asked Pilate to change the title - “...Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews” (John19:21). Pilate refused to change the sign and answered, “What I have written I have written” (John 19:22).

There are foreshadowing’s of Messiah as well in the other two Passover elements - unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The unleavened bread reveals 3 characteristics of Messiah. 1) It was “pure” – it contained no leaven (a symbol of sin). Jesus knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5). 2) It was “pierced” – Jesus was pierced with a crown of thorns, with nails, and with a Roman spear. 3) It was “pin-striped” - Isaiah wrote how Messiah was striped in our stead, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

The bitter herbs reveal the bitterness of Calvary. Jesus willingly drank the bitter dregs of the cup of our salvation (Matthew 26:39). He bore the bitterness of our sins and nailed them to His cross (Colossians 2:14). Only by faith in His precious blood can sinners be redeemed from the bitterness of sin. No wonder the Apostle Paul loudly proclaimed, “Christ is our Passover!” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

CHAPTER 2

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.”
Leviticus 23:6-8

The Pronouncement

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is the second spring festival and is observed in close conjunction with Passover. As a matter of fact, modern Judaism combines the first three feasts (Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits) into one week long feast called Pesach. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is recorded in Leviticus 23:6-8 and lasts for seven (7) days, beginning on the 15th day of Nisan and continuing through the 21st day of the month.



When the Israelites fled Egypt they took dough before it had time to rise (leaven). When they baked it the next day, it was unleavened bread - “And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.... And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders” (Exodus 12:30-31; 34).

The Israelites had no time to knead their dough and allow it to rise, for Pharaoh ordered that they leave immediately. Therefore, the Israelites took dough and left in haste. On the next day, they baked their dough and made unleavened bread.

The fermenting and permeating nature of leaven is commonly used as a metaphor for sin. The Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates this experience of Israel and is celebrated on the day after Passover. God commanded Israel to eat only pure, unleavened bread for seven (7) days every year in order to remember the “bread of affliction.”

The Practice

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Hebrew: Hag HaMatzah) gets its name from the commandment that “no leavened bread” was to be eaten during this observance. As we have already stated, God often used “leaven” in His Word to illustrate the permeating power of sin. Rabbis instruct Jews that the Feast of Unleavened Bread teaches that one’s life should be free from all malice and sinfulness. Of course, even Christians would agree that we too should abstain from all appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Religious Jews eat “unleavened bread” called “matzo.” This unleavened bread is free of leaven (yeast). The Feast of Unleavened Bread is one of the most commonly observed holidays because of its relationship to Passover. The Feast of Unleavened Bread signals the beginning of harvest season in Israel. During this weeklong feast, nothing containing leaven may be eaten. Abstaining from leavened bread for seven days is considered symbolic of God’s people separating themselves from sin and becoming a holy people and walking in holiness unto the Lord.

Leavening is a fermenting process in which yeast turns the food sour. According to Jewish rabbis, no product can be eaten on Passover or Pesach if it is cooked before the fermenting process begins. It is interesting to note the Israelites that came out of Egypt after the first Passover made dough and baked it on the next day (Exodus 12:34), yet modern Judaism states that no products made of grain can be eaten if it has not been cooked within 18 minutes of mixing the dough with water. They prefer to err on the side of caution.

It seems appropriate to mention that Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for trying to keep the letter of the Law, yet were ignorant of the spirit of the Law. For instance, these religious leaders in the day of Jesus Christ were so concerned about the commandment of tithing, that they would not overlook the sprigs of seasoning herbs in their gardens – i.e. mint, rue, and dill (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42). God did not give this commandment because He needs the loan. He gave it to provide for the welfare of Israel. Instead of seeing the love and grace provided by tithing, the religious leaders saw only harsh rules that must be obeyed in order for mankind to be justified before God. Obviously, man can never be justified in the sight of God by our deeds.

Man is utterly and inherently sinful. God’s Word clearly declares, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7).

The rules of leavening apply to foods prepared out of any of the five kinds of grain: barley, wheat, rye, oats, and spelt. Although wine is fermented, it does not fall into the category of leaven because it is not made from one of these five types of grain. Many Orthodox Jews also avoid rice, corn, peanuts, and beans because all of these items have been used to make bread, thus prohibiting these also avoids any confusion.

Matzo bread, which is used for modern-day Pesach, is made from wheat, but great care is taken to make sure that it is baked soon after mixing it into dough to avoid the process of fermentation to take place. Jews will look for the markings of a reputable rabbinical authority authorizing the matzo to be “kosher for Passover”.

For seven (7) days Jews were commanded by God to eat only unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:6; Exodus 12:15). Therefore, this feast is considered a high Sabbath (yearly Sabbath). No servile work should be done on the first (Nisan 15) or the last day of the feast (Nisan 21), with the exception of food preparation (Exodus 12:16). The feast was declared a memorial forever (Exodus 12:17).

The Prophecy

There are several foreshadowing’s that can be discussed in the observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread is itself a beautiful type of Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah). Jesus proclaimed, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:32-33; 35). It is no coincidence that Jesus (the Bread of Life) was born in Bethlehem (literally means “the house of bread).

Paul used illustrations of Passover and unleavened bread to describe how believers ought to live in light of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote, “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

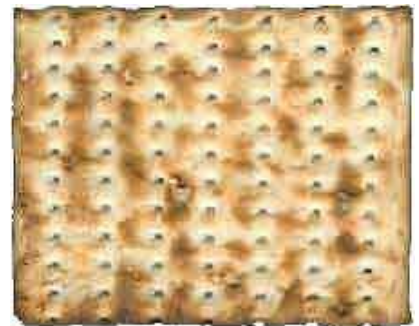
We have already discussed how matzo is “pure, pierced, and pin-striped”, but it merits mentioning once again concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Matzo is pure because it contains no leaven (symbolic of sin); Jesus knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5).

Jesus was “virgin-born; conceived of the Holy Ghost,” therefore, the blood that pulsated through His veins was the very blood of God.

Matzo is pierced – it has holes in it. Our Lord Jesus was pierced on our behalf. A crown of thorns pierced his brow; the nails of the Cross pierced His hands and feet; and a Roman spear pierced His side.

Matzo is “pin-striped.” It is baked at very high temperatures for 8-10 seconds causing a striping effect upon the thin, unleavened bread.

Likewise, our Lord Jesus bore our stripes when a “cat of nine-tails” was used to beat him. Though He was sinless and innocent, wicked men scourged and beat him. Isaiah spoke of the stripes Messiah received on our behalf. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).



Both unleavened bread and wine foreshadowed the Messiah. Grain and grapes must be conceived, cultivated, cut, and crushed before they can be consumed. The same is true of our Lord Jesus. He was conceived of the Holy Ghost to a virgin espoused to a man named Joseph. Mary was a virgin, and she acknowledged this truth when speaking to the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:31). Jesus was cultivated (reared and trained) as a Jew by His mother Mary and her husband Joseph. From a child we find Jesus obeying every jot and tittle of the Law (Matthew 5:19; Luke 2:40-52). He was reared to observe and to do all of the Law. Jesus was also cut and crushed when He was nailed to the Cross of Calvary. Isaiah spoke of Messiah being “cut off.”

Listen to the voice of Isaiah – “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet is pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...” (Isaiah 53:6-10a).



The Prophet Daniel also spoke of Messiah being “cut off.” In Daniel’s 70 Weeks Prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27), God revealed His plan for Israel and the world in Daniel’s prophecy. Without going into too much detail, the 70 weeks are really weeks of years, not days. History bears record that 483 years of this program have come to pass exactly as Daniel foretold. According to Daniel 9:24, God ordained a program consisting of 490 years to deal with Israel and to accomplish the following:

1. **“To finish the transgression”** – rejection of Messiah
2. **“To make an end of sins”** – first by His perfect sacrifice and secondly by His perfect presence among mankind
3. **“To make reconciliation for iniquities”** – when Messiah came the first time, He made it possible for all men to be reconciled; when Messiah comes again, Israel will be reconciled
4. **“To bring in everlasting righteousness”** – Only Messiah, the Prince of Peace, can bring everlasting righteousness (Isaiah 9:6)
5. **“To seal up the vision and prophecy”** - God is going to put the last period at the end of the last sentence of the last paragraph on the last page in the last chapter of world history
6. **“To anoint the most Holy”** – Messiah will sit upon the throne of His father David in the holy city of Jerusalem

According to the prophecy, 483 years would transpire before Messiah would be “cut off.” This is exactly how many years occurred from the decree of Artaxerxes allowing his Jewish captives to return to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the crucifixion of Messiah. These are the words written by Daniel – “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks (49 years), and threescore and two weeks (434 years): the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks (49 years + 434 years = 483 years) shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...” (Daniel 9:25-26a). Jesus Christ died right on time! Messiah was “cut off and crushed” by the weight of our sins He bore on Calvary (parentheses mine).

Like the grain and the grape, Jesus Christ must also be consumed. Without partaking of Messiah by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), He cannot be enjoyed. A person can realize that Jesus Christ was sacrificed for their sins, yet die and spend eternity in hell because they did not consume Him personally! How difficult it must be for those presently suffering the torments of hell to remember they could have escaped their pain and suffering by accepting Christ as their Savior. To realize that Jesus is the only means of salvation and die in your sins is a most pitiful plight. My friend, IF you believe Jesus is the Son of God; don’t put it off any longer!

God’s Word clearly beckons the lost – “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!” (Acts 16:31). “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9-10). “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13). “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). Jesus Himself calls out to the lost – “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). You have God’s promise of eternal life if you will only consume Christ. Accept Him as your Lord and Savior today!

The Feast of Unleavened Bread also illustrates the change that should take place in a person’s life the moment they are born-again. Just as a “little leaven” corrupts the whole lump of dough, so a little sin can also distort the character of a Christian. There is no lapse of time between Passover (redemption) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (holiness; sanctification). Believers ought to live sanctified, holy lives unto the Lord immediately after redemption. Too often “so-called Christians” attempt to excuse sin in their own lives by claiming they have only been saved a short time. However, the Holy Spirit, received the instance one is saved, is quite able to enable us to live holy unto the Lord. The same Holy Spirit that convicted us of sin and drew us to Jesus Christ is also able to convict believers of sin after they have been saved. When we are born-again, we ought to desire to be obedient to God’s Word. There ought to be a change in the lives of God’s children.

We are instructed to “put off” the old, sinful manner of life we once lived. Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). Paul wrote to the Galatian believers, “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law, Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:16-24).

Just as the unleavened bread sustained the Israelites, New Testament believers are sustained by feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. For seven days the Israelites were commanded to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Hebrew word for seven is “shevah.” The root word of shevah is “savah” which means “to be full or satisfied; to have enough.” The world is ill equipped to satisfy the soul, but those who feed upon Christ Jesus find “peace that passeth understanding.”

The Jewish search for leaven in the home also illustrates important lessons for us to learn. The candle used in the search is symbolic of God’s Word, our Lamp and our Light (Psalm 119:105). Just as the candle reveals leaven in the dark places of the house, God’s Word reveal sin in the dark crevices of our lives. The feather pictures the Holy Spirit. Just as the feather is used to sweep leaven onto a wooden spoon, so the Holy Spirit sweeps our thoughts to the wooden cross on which Christ bore our sins.

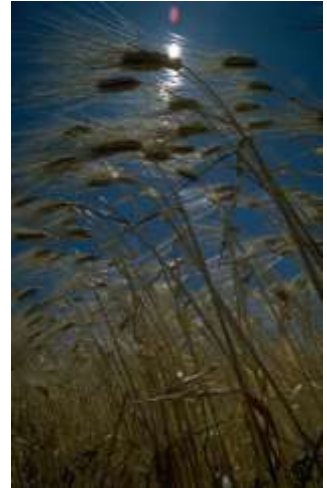
The paper bag depicts the grave where Messiah was placed. Once filled with leaven, the paper bag is cast into the fire symbolizing the judgment of sin. Christ too paid the penalty for sin, and He conquered death and hell and rose victoriously from the grave!

Paul gave this instruction to the Colossian believers, “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:13-15). “We owed a debt we could not pay, while Jesus paid a debt He did not owe.” Our sins, like the leaven burned in the fire, will never be remembered again. Hallelujah! What a Savior

CHAPTER 3

The Feast of Firstfruits

“And the LORD spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete:” Leviticus 23:9-15



The Pronouncement

The third of the spring holidays is recorded in Leviticus 23:9-15. The name of this holiday is the Feast of Firstfruits. This holiday is observed during the spring harvest, and God instructed His people to wave the firstfruits of their harvest before the Lord in their natural state – an omer of barley. In Hebrew the feast is called Yom HaBikkurim or Sfirat Haomer. The meaning of word firstfruits is “a promise to come.” The Feast of Firstfruits is sometimes called Atseret meaning “a solemn assembly.” This name is given because the congregation of Israel brought a special thanks offering to the Temple after its construction.

The Feast of Firstfruits serves as a reminder that God gave the land and all of its fruit to Israel, and that all things belong to Jehovah. Possibly because the Priest waved the offering and Firstfruits remained an ordinary workday, some Jews do not consider this feast a “high, holy day.” As a matter of fact, some Jews do not consider it a feast at all. The Feast of Firstfruits is observed on the day following the Sabbath after Passover, or the 17th day of Nisan. Some Jewish movements contend that there are actually two Firstfruits – Early Firstfruits and Latter Firstfruits (also called the Feast of Weeks or

Pentecost). The counting of the fifty days between these two Firstfruits is called The Counting of the Omer.

The Counting of the Omer is an interesting aspect of the God's instruction to Israel. They were commanded to count fifty days from the offering of their firstfruits to Pentecost. The counting served as a time of great anticipation. According to Jewish tradition, Israel was informed beforehand that they would receive the Torah (Law) fifty days following their Exodus from Egypt. It is taught that they were so excited about receiving the Torah they began counting the fifty days after crossing the Red Sea. There is no Biblical evidence of this tradition, however.



The Practice

The traditional practices among modern Orthodox Jews in observance of the Feast of Firstfruits differ from the times of Moses and the Temple era in Jerusalem. Many customs and practices had to be altered because since of the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD. We will look first at the observances of the feast in Biblical times and then discuss practices of Orthodox Jews today.

In the days of Temple worship the Israelites would bring a special “thank offering” to Jerusalem. The Feast of Firstfruits was observed on the Sabbath following Passover. Jews would reap their harvest and bring a sheaf of barley (usually harvested by Passover) to the Priest, who would in turn wave it before the Lord. Israelites would begin counting the days of omer (50 days total) anticipating the next holiday called Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks. The Torah specified that no fruit was to be gathered from newly planted fruit trees for the first three years, and firstfruits of the fourth year were to be consecrated unto the Lord (Leviticus 19:23-25).

The Feast of Firstfruits was the first harvest of the year, making it an excellent time to give the grain offering to the Lord. Not until the firstfruits of the harvest were waved before the Lord could the remainder of the harvest be consumed. Farmers in Israel were required to mark the fruits and grains that were most ripened, usually with a scarlet thread, and designated them to be firstfruits. Rabbinic teachings set a minimum of one-sixteenth of the harvest to be so designated and taken to the Temple as firstfruits.

The Counting of Omer followed and lasted for fifty days. It was considered a time of great anticipation. This counting can be compared to that of a prisoner or slave waiting the time of freedom. It demonstrated a desire and anticipation of a certain event to transpire. Jewish literature maintains that when Israel was told of their forthcoming deliverance from Egypt, they were also informed that fifty days thereafter they would receive the Torah (Law). The Israelites were so excited that they began counting the days.

Modern Judaism has made certain changes to past customs and practices employed in the observance of the Feast of Firstfruits. There are several reasons for these changes. Modern Judaism has been dispersed among the Gentile nations and no longer has a Temple for national worship. There are many movements of Judaism that have developed since the Diaspora of Jews among Gentile nations. Agriculture is no longer the main vocation of Jewish people, mainly because they have been stripped time and again of all of their farming tools, land, and desire. Over the centuries of the Diaspora many Jews have chosen more academic vocations to prevent being stripped in such a manner. This would explain why so Jewish men and women engage in business, science, entertainment, medical, law, politics, literature, and other academic endeavors. They place great value on education, and many Jews have become successful doctors, lawyers, financial experts, entertainers, scientists, and businessmen. As a matter of fact, it has been stated that the six (6) most influential men in history are Jesus, Moses, Apostle Paul, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, and Karl Marx. The one thing that all six of these men have in common is that they were all Jewish!



Though Jews no longer bring their firstfruits to a Temple to be waved by the High Priest, Judaism still maintains their practice of counting of the omer. The counting begins on the second day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or on the 17th day of Nisan. Each evening, the leader of the Jewish home stands with his family and recites the following blessing – “Blessed are You, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments, commanding us to count the omer.” This prayer is followed by the count of the day – “Today is the first day of Omer.” On each following day, they would recite – “Today is the second day of Omer.... Today is the third day of Omer... Today is the fourth day of Omer.... etc.”

Some Jews recite Psalm 67 because it consists of seven verses and forty-nine words in Hebrew. Modern Judaism contends that The Counting of Omer also serves as a period of semi-mourning for the many tragedies associated with this time of the year. Orthodox Jews do not shave, cut their hair, or perform weddings during this fifty-day period of time.

The Prophecy

As with all of the feasts of the Lord, there are several foreshadowings of Messiah. It is interesting to note that Israelites who have observed the Feast of Firstfruits for thousands of years have been in the dark to what the wave offering depicts. Those of us who have been born-again can easily realize that the wave offering is foreshadowing the Lord Jesus Christ, Israel’s Messiah.

The Apostle Paul informed believers in his first epistle to the Corinthians, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20), this expresses the resurrection. Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) is the Firstfruits of the harvest that is coming one day when the dead in Christ shall rise from the graves! We call this great prophetic event the “Rapture” (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The first three (3) feasts (Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, and Feast of Firstfruits) provide a beautiful foreshadowing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Most of the Christian world celebrates Palm Sunday as the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11). Later that same week, Jesus was crucified on Calvary. The question is often asked, “On what day was Jesus crucified?” Most Christians celebrate Good Friday as the day He was nailed to an old, rugged cross. However, this would make the prophecy that Jesus gave in Matthew impossible - “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:38-40). One might ask, “What difference does it make what day Jesus was crucified?” I believe it makes a difference because all prophecies must prove accurate, lest the whole Bible be untrustworthy. I believe that these first three feasts were literally fulfilled by in every minute detail.

According to Exodus 12:3, Israel was to take a lamb on the 10th day of the first month, Nisan. They were to observe the lamb for a period of four (4) days, and then on the 14th day of Nisan, they were to kill their lamb. They were to place the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of their house. Afterwards, with their traveling clothes on, they were to eat their lamb, roasted with fire, and with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

Jesus, in fulfillment of these foreshadowings, presented Himself as the Lamb of God when He rode into Jerusalem on Sunday, the 10th day of Nisan in accordance to Exodus 12:3. During the next four days, Israel had the opportunity to observe Him as the spotless, sinless Lamb of God, further satisfying the requirement of Passover. We must remember that the Jewish day begins at sunset. At sunset on Sunday, the 10th of Nisan, it became the 11th. On Monday at sunset, it became the 12th; on Tuesday at sunset, it became the 13th; and on Wednesday at sunset, it became Thursday, the 14th day of Nisan – Passover.

Jesus observed His last Passover meal with His disciples, and then He instituted the Lord’s Supper on Wednesday (14th of Nisan on Jewish calendar). Judas left the others early that evening to betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. Following the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested, given a mock trial, and ultimately crucified on Calvary at 9:00 am on Thursday, still the 14th day of Nisan – Passover.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (15th day of Nisan) was an annual Sabbath, and no servile work was to be done on this day (Leviticus 23:6-8). At sunset it would become the 15th day of Nisan on which

Unleavened Bread was to be observed. For this reason the Jewish leadership wanted to expedite the deaths of the three men crucified on Golgotha. It was customary for soldiers to break the legs of those crucified in order to hasten their deaths. They broke the legs of the two thieves, and would have broken the legs of Jesus, but they found He was already dead. It is no coincidence that Jesus died precisely at 3:00 pm. Each day sacrifices were offered at the Temple at 9:00 am and 3:00 pm. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was offered at precisely 9:00 am, the time of the morning sacrifice, and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost at 3:00 pm, the time of the evening sacrifice.

The body of Messiah was taken from the cross to the tomb of a man named Joseph of Arimathaea. There He was buried before sunset on Thursday, the 14th day of Nisan, and before the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an “annual Sabbath.” It is interesting to note that Nicodemus and Joseph, both devout Jews, did not care if touching the body of a dead person defiled them. They had found their Passover Lamb – Adonai Yeshua HaMashiach – The Lord Jesus the Messiah!



In fulfillment of the prophecy of Matthew 12:38-40, Jesus spent three (3) days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) and three nights (3) (Thursday, Friday, Saturday) in the “heart of the earth” Sometime early Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the grave, and when the women came to the tomb, they found an angel who spoke to them saying, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you” (Matthew 28:5-7).

Just as Passover foreshadowed the death of the Lamb of God, so the Feast of Firstfruits foreshadowed His glorious resurrection from the dead. Paul continued his teaching of the Corinthians by writing, “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:21-23).



It is no coincidence that Jesus Christ is called the “Branch of the Lord” (Isaiah 4:2) and the “Righteous Branch” (Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15). The Prophet Isaiah described Messiah as a plant, “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2).

The sheaf of barley offered on the 17th day of Nisan, the day after the first Sabbath following Passover, clearly foreshadows the Lord Jesus. He was resurrected on this same day 2,000 years ago, and offered as payment for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Jesus was resurrected as the “firstfruits of them that slept.” He is the substance of the shadow. In essence, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead serves as God’s promise that all who receive the Lord Jesus Christ that they will be resurrected one day as well!



Paul wrote to the Romans about the importance of the Christ’s resurrection, “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). Jesus comforted His disciples before He went to the Cross by saying, “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:19-20). The Lord’s teaching in John 12:24 indicated that He must die in order for us to live,

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”

The Hebrew root of bikkurim (firstfruits) is the same as that of bechor (firstborn). In Biblical days, the firstborn of man and beast were dedicated to God as a means of honor and worship. The Word of God teaches the importance of the firstborn in the birth of Jesus. Speaking of Joseph’s relationship with Mary, Matthew wrote, “And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:25). Notice that Jesus was the firstborn of Mary. Paul expanded this important principle of truth to the Romans, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29).

God desires us to bear fruit while living in this “present, evil world.” Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:1-8). Unfortunately, while God is focusing on fruit, believers are often focusing on other things. Sometimes we focus on gifts that God has given instead of the fruit we ought to produce as a result of God’s grace in our lives.

A comparison of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Firstfruits gives us a beautiful illustration of what God desires in our salvation. When a sinner receives Jesus Christ as Savior their spiritual position changes. All men are born in sin because of our fleshly heritage in Adam (Romans

3:10; 23; 5:12). After one is “born-again” (saved), their position before God changes. Sins are forgiven, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto us (placed to our account).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread teaches believers to “put off the old man,” while the Feast of Firstfruits teaches believers to “put on the new man”. Paul put it this way, “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24). Paul wrote to the Galatians, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). And finally, Paul gave a clear example of Christ as our Firstfruits when he wrote, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Ephesians 5:1-2).

It is uncertain whether or not the disciples of Jesus knew that fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits, the Comforter (Holy Ghost) would come upon them in Jerusalem. However, the Lord Jesus told His disciples that after His departure, the Father would send them the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (John 14:25-27). Jesus told the disciples, “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, will thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8).

Surely, the disciples must have wondered, at least hoped, that on the 50th day following the first Sabbath after Passover, they would have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost that Jesus spoke about. They surely anticipated something great would occur on this day. The Scriptures reveal that the disciples did obey the Lord, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). What happened next was quite a glorious event, as we will see in our next chapter!

It is interesting to point out several Biblical events that occurred on the 17th day of Nisan. This day has quite a pedigree of Biblical landmarks. It is also interesting to note that in each event, a type of “resurrection” is revealed.

BIBLICAL EVENTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED ON 17TH DAY OF NISAN:

- Nisan 17 Noah's Ark safely rested on Mt. Ararat (Genesis 8:4)
- Nisan 17 Hebrews enter Egypt (Exodus 12:40-41)
- Nisan 17 Israel crosses the Red Sea (Exodus 3:18; 5:3)
- Nisan 17 Day of Firstfruits; Israel entered and ate the fruits of the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10-12)
- Nisan 17 The Walls of Jericho (Joshua 5:13)
- Nisan 17 The Cleansing of the Temple by Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:1-28)
- Nisan 17 Queen Esther saves Hebrews from Haman (Esther 3:12; 5:1)
- Nisan 17 The Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah (John 20:1)

The odds of just two (2) of these events happening on the same day of the Jewish calendar (360 days) have been calculated to be a ratio of 1:129,000. The odds of all of these events happening on the same day of the Hebrew year have been calculated to be a ratio of 1:783 quadrillion, 864 trillion, 876 billion, and 960 million or the number 783,864,876,960,000,000. In other words, it would be virtually impossible without Divine intervention. Truly, nothing is too hard for the LORD!

CHAPTER 4

The Feast of Pentecost

“And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD. And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the LORD. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be a holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 23:15-22



שְׁבוּעוֹת

The Pronouncement

There are many names for the fourth feast instituted in Leviticus Chapter 23. It is best known by the Greek name Pentecost meaning “fiftieth.” This name is derived from “The Counting of the Omer” that is fifty days in duration. Pentecost is mentioned in the New Testament in Acts 2:1. In the Old Testament times the feast was called the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22), and the Day of the Congregation (Deuteronomy 18:16). Modern Judaism refers to it by the

Hebrew name Shavuot meaning “Latter Firstfruits” or Atseret meaning “stop, cease, or conclusion of the seven weeks of counting.”

Pentecost is a major festival marking the end of the barley harvest and the beginning of the wheat harvest. On the day after the first Sabbath following Passover (Nisan 17), Israelites begin counting the fifty days of omer in anticipation of the Feast of Pentecost. It is considered the closing festival of the Passover season (Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:9-10).

It is also referred to as “Latter Firstfruits” of the spring harvest. The “Early Firstfruits” (Nisan 17) required Israel to bring a sheaf of barley (unprocessed flour) as an offering unto the Lord. The “Latter Firstfruits” (fifty days later) required an offering of wheat (processed and refined flour). Some Jewish movements consider Latter Firstfruits or Pentecost to be the more important of the two feasts of the spring harvest.

Pentecost is the only festival for which no specific date is given. Rather, the Hebrews were simply instructed to count seven weeks “...from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering” (Leviticus 23:15). This holiday occurs in the month Sivan (May or June). It concludes the wheat growing season and the spring holidays.

Jewish tradition states that Israel was promised the Torah (Law) fifty days following their exodus from Egypt; therefore, many rabbis teach that Pentecost is an anniversary celebration of the giving of Torah. They conclude that the holiday should be a time of strengthening personal relationships with God by rededicating themselves to the study and observance of the Law. They remind their congregations that when Jehovah revealed Himself on Mt. Sinai, their forefathers heard His voice proclaim the Ten Commandments, and they pledged their obedience saying, “... All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient” (Exodus 24:7).

According to some rabbis, Passover freed the nation of Israel from physical bondage, but the giving of Torah (Law) on Pentecost some 3,000 years ago freed Israel from spiritual bondage to idolatry and immorality. It is interesting to note that later the nation of Israel did fall back into immorality and idolatry on several occasions. Not until after the Babylonian captivity was Israel cured of worshipping pagan idols.

The Practice



The Feast of Pentecost (Feast of Weeks or Shavuot) is one of three (3) times that all young Jewish men are required each year to appear before the Lord.

This type of feast is called a “pilgrim feast” (Exodus 23:17; 34:23;

Deuteronomy 16:16). The reason for making such a pilgrimage on Pentecost was to enable the person to present a wave offering unto the Lord. The offering on Pentecost consisted of two (2) loaves of bread

baked “with leaven” (Leviticus 23:15-21). The loaves were to be brought in addition to seven (7) male lambs, a young bull, and two (2) rams to be offered as a burnt offering (Leviticus 23:18). A sin offering of a male goat was to be offered also (Leviticus 23:19).

During the second Temple era, Israelites would gather in their hometowns and sleep all night in the streets in order to prevent being exposed to any impurities within houses. In the early morning, an overseer would walk among the people and wake them up by crying aloud, “Get up, let us arise and go unto the house of Zion, to the house of the Lord our God!” Those in the Jerusalem area would join a procession carrying fresh fruit, pomegranates, dates, and grapes. Others in the rear of the procession would carry dried figs, fruits, and raisins. Only the best fruits were to be chosen for these offerings. An ox offering was placed at the front of the procession. It was a sight to behold as its horns were overlaid with gold, and an olive branch and crown placed upon its head. Each family carried two (2) wave loaves of bread made with the finest flour.

The wave offerings reflected Israel’s thankfulness and dependence upon the Lord of the harvest. Israel offered their sacrifices as a form of worship and thanksgiving for their daily bread, even as God had supplied them manna in the wilderness after the crossing of the Red Sea during the exodus from Egypt. Judaism emphasizes the link between Passover and Pentecost by the wave offerings of Firstfruits and Pentecost. On Firstfruits a sheaf of barley is waved before the Lord. On Pentecost two loaves of bread are baked and waved before the Lord to reveal the bounty of the Lord supply.

In the absence of a Temple in Jerusalem, modern Judaism has adopted several new practices and traditions in observing the Feast of Pentecost. Each year Shavuot is a precious time for spiritual awakening and strengthening of faith in God. It is a time of rededication and study of Torah, as well as a time of thanksgiving for God’s ample supply for His people. Many Jewish homes are decorated with flowers and greens, symbolic of the spring harvest. This is usually the responsibility of the children who are sent to gather wild flowers to place in containers throughout the house.

Before sunset on Shavuot, in the tradition of Passover, the woman of the household lights the festival candles that commences the observance, and a blessing is recited. Two (2) loaves of bread with leaven are baked in accordance with God's command, "Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD" (Leviticus 23:17). The Feast of Pentecost is a "high Sabbath day", therefore, no work is performed, although it is considered permissible to bake, cook, kindle a light, and do what is necessary to celebrate the feast.



Judaism has also adopted the custom of eating at least one dairy meal during the weeklong celebration, though the reason for this practice is debated among Jews. Some say that this practice is a reminder of God's promise to their ancestors of a "land flowing with milk and honey." In light of this belief, some Jewish homes also display dishes full of Bit-O-Honey candy. It is customary to serve cheese dishes such as cheese blintzes, hot, with sour cream or applesauce to satisfy this custom. Cheesecake with cherries, strawberries, blueberries, or some other fruit is also served during the week.

Another interesting custom of modern Judaism is staying up all night on the first day of Shavuot (Pentecost) to study the Tanach (Old Testament) and to pray in the early morning hours. Allowing their children to remain awake later than normal is considered a memorable experience for them. During this time parents will often play Scripture games with their children or watch videos such as The Ten Commandments. Families will read the story of the Exodus to pass on their Jewish heritage.

There are many passages from the Tanach that are read, but most select Exodus 19:20-20:18 – "And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze and many of them perish. And let the priests also, which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them. And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it. And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou, and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them. So Moses went down onto the people, and spake unto them. And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath

of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. And all the people saw the thundering, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off."

Another favorite passage read in Jewish homes during Pentecost is found in Zephaniah 3:17-20, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD."

On Pentecost it is customary to teach children to memorize the commandments in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:1-2; 6-7, "Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged....And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Many homes will also read the Book of Ruth. This book is a classic model of a young woman who converted to Judaism out of love and responsibility. It reveals the Jewish community's care for one who had become poor and deprived by the loss of her husband. Ruth's commitment to the people and the faith of her mother-in-law, Naomi, are considered similar lessons of Pentecost. Modern Judaism equates the Feast of Pentecost with the giving of the Torah (Law), and Israel's acceptance of it. Rabbis teach their congregations that all Jews should commit themselves to Torah, as did Ruth to Naomi. They instruct that in so doing, God will reward their faithfulness and supply their needs. David, a descendent of Ruth and Boaz, has traditional ties with this harvest feast.

The Prophecy

The Feast of Pentecost is replete with Messianic significance. It not only memorializes the giving of the law written on tablets of stone at Mt. Sinai, but it also commemorates the day on which God wrote His law in the hearts of believers – The Day of Pentecost. Let us look at a brief comparison of these two days of Pentecost:

FIRST PENTECOST

The Commandments were given

Fifty days after crossing of the Red Sea

Law written on tables of stone

3,000 slain

The letter of the Law

DAY OF PENTECOST

The Holy Spirit was given

Fifty days after resurrection of Messiah

Law written on fleshly tables of hearts

3,000 souls saved

The Spirit of the Law

Jesus foretold His disciples of His impending death. He emphasized the necessity of His departure in order that they receive from the Father the Comforter (Holy Ghost), who would instruct them, in all things (John 14:1-31). The Lord Jesus instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. Acts 1:4 reveals this conversation between Jesus and His disciples, “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many day hence.”

In Acts Chapter 2 we find the record of the Day of Pentecost and how the foreshadowings of the Feast of Pentecost came to fruition. “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit empowered the believers, and on that day 3,000 souls were saved. Jesus Christ is called the “Firstfruits of them which slept” by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:20. Because of Christ’s resurrection, all who receive Him by grace through faith are “spiritually resurrected” at conversion. Since the day of Pentecost, all believers are baptized into the one body with Jesus Christ as head of that body, the Church.

Everything in the life of Jesus occurred right on time in accordance with God’s Divine Will. The Feast of Pentecost was one of three annual pilgrimage feasts. Hebrews made their way to Jerusalem to

worship in the Temple. It was a time when thousands of Jews gathered together to the Holy city of God. Luke mentions this truth in Acts 2:5, “And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of nation under heaven.” Fifty (50) days after the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Pentecost was observed with joy and thanksgiving.

Forty (40) days after the resurrection of Jesus on Nisan 17, the Lord Jesus told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4), to wait for the promise of the Father (Acts 1:5), and that they would receive power and be witnesses of Him (Acts 1:8). How appropriate the streets of the city were crowded with Jewish worshippers making their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. God gave amazing evidence of the great harvest of souls made possible by His only begotten Son. After the disciples were baptized with the Holy Ghost, it did not take long for those in Jerusalem to hear the uneducated, ignorant Galilean fishermen preaching in languages from all around the world (Acts 2:5-12). The crowds were amazed and asked, “...What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12).

The response of Peter to this important question is revealed in Acts 2:16-21, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The prophet Joel had prophesied that in the last days the Holy Spirit would be poured out. Peter declared that Joel’s prophecy had come to pass (Acts 2:14-31). The 120 believers assembled in the Upper Room in Jerusalem became the first of a vast multitude of witnesses of Christ. Since that day this small group has multiplied and gone forth with the glorious Gospel “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16).

The 2 loaves of bread used as a wave offering provide a beautiful picture of the provision of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit has been poured out, and disciples of Jesus Christ have been empowered to be witnesses of Him to the whole world. Peter declared, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). The 2 loaves of bread baked with leaven reveal that both Jews and Gentiles alike can be saved!

A new era or dispensation began on the Day of Pentecost. No longer was the Gospel to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles as well. The 2 loaves were baked with leaven, a symbol of sin. All men are born sinners, and the wages of sin is still death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). All men are born with the curse of sin because all men are descendents of Adam (Romans 5:12). God’s Word clearly states, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). Paul declared, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon him” (Romans 10:12). In other words, both Jews and Gentiles need a Savior. No doubt Peter’s statement created quite a stir among the Jews in Jerusalem when he said, “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21)! However, Peter made known that the promises made by John the Baptist (Luke 3:16) and

Jesus the Messiah (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) were fulfilled on this particular day - Pentecost. On this day, the Holy Spirit had indeed been poured out as promised.

The “grain of wheat” clearly foreshadowed Messiah. “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). The offering of Pentecost was not an unrefined sheaf of barley, as in the Feast of Firstfruits. Rather it was processed barley, beaten, sifted, and crushed into fine flour. This flour was used to bake 2 loaves of bread baked with leaven.

Messiah was also beaten, sifted, and crushed. Isaiah provides one of the most vivid descriptions of how Messiah was treated in our stead. “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:3-6). Jesus Christ became the Substitute for sinful men. He took the beating and the death we all deserve. Like the flour used for the offering of Pentecost, God gave us His very best in order to redeem and reconcile us unto Himself. The 2 loaves provide the universal efficacy of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. The loaves offered were quite large. According to Leviticus 23:17, they were to use two tenth deals of flour. This would be about 4 quarts or sixteen cups of flour. The loaves baked would be approximately 12” x 21” x 3” in size. Neither Jews nor Gentiles are without sin (pictured by leaven). Today, the body of Christ, the Church, is made up of Jews and Gentiles who have trusted Christ as Savior. There is ample supply for “whosoever” desires to be saved. The Lord Jesus has promised to save all who come unto Him (John 6:37).

CHAPTER 5

The Feast of Trumpets

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.” Leviticus 23:23-25



רֵאשִׁית הַשָּׁנָה

The Pronouncement

Most Christians are somewhat familiar with the spring holidays of the Jewish calendar, but few are familiar with the fall feasts. Preparations for the fall holiday festivals begin a full month in advance. On the 1st of Elul a forty-day season called Teshuvah (return or repentance) begins. Teshuvah ends on the Day of

Atonement (Yom Kippur), which falls on the 10th of Tishri, the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. This forty-day season is a time of introspection and repentance. Judaism teaches that all should examine their lives and restore relationships between God and their fellow man. The first thirty days comprise the month of Elul. The last ten (10) days of Teshuvah are called the “Days of Awe.”

During the first thirty days prior to the Feast of Trumpets, which falls on the first day of the seventh month of Tishri, the shofar (ram’s horn or trumpet) is blown every morning in the synagogue to remind people that the holy days of the fall are approaching. They are exhorted to prepare themselves accordingly. We will later look at the interesting customs involved in their preparation. It is also important to note the long period between the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Trumpets.

This period too will be discussed in detail when we look at the prophetic significances of the Feast of Trumpets.

Modern Judaism refers to the Feast of Trumpets as Rosh Hashanah (literally “the head of the year”), and it is commonly called the Jewish New Year. You may notice that God instituted of the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah) on the first day of the seventh month, Tishri. The first month of the Jewish religious calendar is Nisan, corresponding with our calendar in the months of March and April. Why, then, does the Jewish "New Year" occur in Tishri, the seventh month? The reason is that Judaism has

several different "new years," a concept which may seem strange at first, but think of it this way: the American "New Year" starts in January, but the new "school year" starts in September, and many businesses have "fiscal years" that start at various times of the year. In Judaism, Nissan 1 serves as the "beginning of months" for the purpose of counting the reign of kings and months on the religious calendar. The 1st of Elul (in August) is the New Year for the tithing of animals. Shevat 15 (in February) is the New Year for trees (determining when first fruits can be eaten, etc.). The 1st of Tishri (Rosh Hashanah) is the New Year for years (when year numbers are increased). Sabbatical and Jubilee years begin at this time.

The Lord instituted the Feast of Trumpets in Leviticus 23:23-25 as a memorial of blowing trumpets. God does not specifically say what this day was to memorialize. Many Jews contend that it is a memorial of the grace of Jehovah-jireh (the Lord will provide) revealed in Genesis 22:14. As Abraham prepared to offer his son, Isaac, the Lord provided a ram caught in a thicket by his horns. Some Jews, as well as Christians, contend that the Feast of Trumpets memorializes the creation of the world, at which times the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7).

Jewish sages have taught that after six thousand years are complete, the Day of the Lord will come on the Day of Atonement. The month of Tishri, being the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, parallels the Sabbath as a special and holy time to seek God. The month of Elul is considered a time of preparation just as Friday is considered a time of preparation for the weekly Sabbath.

This holiday is unique in that God does not specifically name it as other holidays. It is simply known in Hebrew as Yom Teruah meaning "the day of the sounding of the shofar." This is the reason that it has become known as the Feast of Trumpets, a special day calling attention to the coming of the most holy day of the year – The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

There are several other themes that surround the Feast of Trumpets. One such theme is the Royalty of God. Jewish liturgical tradition has preserved tunes for many of the prayers that aptly accompany what Chassidic Jews call the "Coronation Day." It is believed that the shofar, in this context, announces the kingship of Jehovah as described in Psalm 98:6, "With trumpets and sound of coronet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King."

A second theme surrounding the Feast of Trumpets is its correlation to Scriptures as a "Day of Judgment." Jewish tradition suggests that God sits in judgment over all of mankind between Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). Jewish sages have authored poems and liturgical books that express the idea that destiny is pre-ordained, and that God seals the fate of mankind for the coming year on the Day of Atonement. The Talmud, a book of rabbinical writings, is one such book authored that expresses this belief.

Many rabbis teach that God has three books. Those who have repented and returned to God are written in the "Book of Righteousness." All other people fall into one of 2 remaining groups. One group is called the "Wholly Wicked", comprised of those who have refused to repent and return to the Lord. The other book is made up by those deemed "intermediates" – people who have not yet been judged and,

therefore, have ten (10) days to repent in order to change the decree of God. If they repent and return to the Lord, their names are written in the Book of Righteousness. The book of Hosea 14:1-9 expresses the theme of repenting and returning unto the Lord, and many use this passage of Scripture to support their belief of this Day of Judgment.

A modern belief that has been adopted in relation with the Feast of Trumpets is theme of “Remembrance.” This too has been adopted because of the Talmud. A Talmudic dictum (Rosh Hashanah 10b) states that on Yom Teruah (Sounding of the Shofar) Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah were “remembered.” This is the reason that the Feast of Trumpets is also referred to as Yom HaZikkaron meaning “the day of remembrance.”

The shofar has always been special to the Hebrew people. Trumpets have played an important part in their history and lives. In Numbers 10, God instructed Israel to make silver trumpets to be blown for various reasons. They were to blow the trumpet for a warning, for war, for worship, and for withdraw. Other trumpets were made of ram’s horns (Joshua 6:8) and were blown on special occasions such as festivals and the arrival of special seasons (Leviticus 23:24; 25:9; 1 Chronicles 15:24; 2 Chronicles 29:27; Psalm 81:3; 98:6). Trumpets are among the prominent instruments that will be used in future prophetic events (Revelation 1:10; 8:2).

The Practice

During ancient Biblical times the Feast of Trumpets was much more festive than practiced by modern Judaism. A look at Amos 8:5 reveals how serious the traditions and practices of observing this feast were in those days. Modern Judaism encourages all Jewish people to begin their preparations for this feast a full month in advance. Although the Feast of Trumpets was instituted to be observed on the 1st of Tishri, modern Judaism begins thirty (30) days before on the 1st of Elul, and continues for an additional ten (10 days) referred to as the “Days of Awe.” This forty-day season is called Teshuvah (return or repentance). As already stated, this period of time was designated for Jewish people to examine their own lives and to restore relationships between God and their fellow man.

As to be expected, Teshuvah is a season of mixed emotions. It is to be considered a time of joy, but at the same time, it is a somber celebration. It is joyous because it is the beginning of a new year. It is a somber time because of the belief that God’s judgment for the coming year will be sealed on the Day of Atonement.

There are three (3) distinct mitzvahs observed on the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah). The 1st of Tishri is considered a “day of solemn rest.” No servile work is done with the exception of cooking. Secondly, the Feast of Trumpets is considered a “memorial,” though God does not specify exactly what it memorializes. Thirdly, it is a “day of the blowing of the shofar or horn.” This is why the holiday is often called Yom Teruah (the day of the sounding of the shofar).

There is some debate among modern Jewish movements about how many days to observe the Feast of Trumpets. The feast begins with the new moon on the 1st of Tishri. In Bible times the feast was celebrated for two days. Talmudic tradition contends that the second day was added during the time of the prophets. However, upon close examination of the Book of Nehemiah, we find that Ezra the priest observed the Feast of Trumpets for two days. “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law... And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law” (Nehemiah 8:2-3; 13).

Modern Judaism observes many new practices and customs in regard to the Feast of Trumpets. Since the feast is foremost a time of introspection, all Jews are exhorted to reflect upon the past year. The sounding of the shofareach morning in the synagogue and Psalm 27 being read twice a day reinforces this idea. Rosh Hashanah or New Year cards are often sent to close friends and relatives, and usually a special collection is received and sent to the poor or charitable organizations. Jewish people have been extremely gracious in giving to charitable organizations over the years.



It is not uncommon to find Jewish people in somber moods during the high holy days of the fall. Judaism teaches that asking forgiveness and righting wrongs enables one to alter the decree of God and ensure that one may be inscribed for a good year. For this reason the common greeting among Jews is “L'shanah tovah,” meaning "for a good year". This is a shortening of "L'shanah tovah tikatev v'taihatem" (or to women, "L'shanah tovah tikatevi v'taihatemi"), which literally means, "May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year."

No work is permitted on Rosh Hashanah. Most of the day is spent in synagogue, where the regular daily liturgy is somewhat expanded. In fact, there is a special prayer book called the “machzor” used for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because of the extensive liturgical changes for these holidays. Cooking is permitted on this holiday. As a matter of fact, the table is beautifully set with a centerpiece of sweet fruits and cakes, symbolic of the hope of a “sweet year to come.” This particular practice can be traced back to King David in 2 Samuel 6:15; 19. Sour and bitter foods are avoided because these would suggest a “bitter year.” Of course, the object of the Days of Awe is to avoid such a decree of God. Other foods eaten during this holiday are gourds, fenugreek, leeks, beets, carrots, and dates.

The “challah bread” is baked for this holiday, as for the weekly Sabbath. However, the loaves of bread are shaped symbolically in four different shapes. A round loaf signifies hopes for a good round year to come. A crown-shaped loaf is a reminder of the kingship of this holiday, as well as the Sovereignty of Jehovah. A



ladder-shaped loaf symbolizes Jacob's ladder or man's effort to direct his life upward to God. A bird-shaped loaf symbolizes God's protection of Israel (Isaiah 31:5).

Another popular custom during Rosh Hashanah is the practice of eating apples dipped in honey, symbolic of the wish for a sweet new year to come. Bread is dipped in honey instead of the usual practice of sprinkling salt on it for this same reason. This is often one of the first religious practices that a Jewish child is exposed to in Judaism (the most common being the lighting of the Chanukah candles and participation in Pesach).



Another popular practice of the holiday is the practice of Tashlikh (literally "casting off"). On the first day of the Feast of Trumpets the congregation of the synagogue will take a break from the long hours of service to gather at a river or nearby stream. The people will turn their pockets inside out symbolically casting off sins into the water. Many congregations today will discard bread crumbs in their pockets taken along for this occasion. The whole ceremony is symbolic of the determination to free oneself from sins and shortcomings during this special holiday. The practice of Tashlikh is not mentioned in the Tanach, but it has remained

a long-standing tradition since popularized in Germany after being endorsed by Rabbi Isaac Luria in the 16th Century. Tradition states it was derived from Micah 7:19 which states, "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

It is interesting to note that all of the following events that occurred on Tishri 1 (according to Jewish tradition):

- ❖ *Adam & Eve were created*
- ❖ *The Flood waters dried up*
- ❖ *Enoch was taken by God*
- ❖ *Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah conceived*
- ❖ *Joseph was freed from prison by Pharaoh*
- ❖ *The forced labor of Hebrews ended in Egypt*
- ❖ *Job contracted leprosy*
- ❖ *Sacrifices began to be offered on the altar built by Ezra*

Of course, the most important practice observed for the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah) is the blowing of the shofar. On both days of the Feast of Trumpets (except when the first day falls upon the weekly Sabbath) the blowing of the shofar is considered the high point of the services. Before the shofar is sounded, the Ba'al Tokea (shofar blower) prepares himself for the task of blowing for the congregation. After much practice to blow the difficult instrument (shofar), and after much prayer, he says, "I am

prepared to fulfill God’s commandment to blow the shofar, as it is prescribed in the Torah, a day of blowing unto you.”

The shape of the shofar (bent and curved) is symbolic of the need for mankind to bow in reverence to Jehovah. The sound of the shofar is broken – a series of staccato blasts to remind people of their need to break their evil inclinations and repent. The sound of the shofar is meant to awaken the people. It is meant to be a startling call to repentance. It is meant to inspire the people to remember the Creator and



to forsake their evil ways. The sounding of the shofar is meant to stir the senses of the people to be sensitive to God; to break the impulses of the heart which are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

The notes blown for this holiday have been established in minute detail by centuries of tradition. There are four (4) different notes or sounds that have been established for the shofar on the Feast of Trumpets:

Tekiah – a pure unbroken sound that calls man to search his heart, abandon his evil ways, and seek forgiveness through repentance

Shevarim – a broken, staccato, trembling sound; symbolizes the sorrow associated with heart-felt repentance when one realizes his iniquities and desires to change his evil ways

Teruah – a wave-like sound of alarm calling upon man to stand by the banner of God

Tekiah Gedolah – a prolonged, unbroken sound typifying a final invitation to sincere repentance and atonement for sins

A total of 100 notes are blown, beginning with thirty blasts immediately after the “Reading of the Torah”. Some movements of Judaism blow thirty more blasts during the silent “Amidah” and another thirty blasts during the “Readers’ Repetition of the Amidah.” The remaining ten notes are sounded at the end of the service. Ashkenazi Jews do not sound the shofar during the silent “Amidah”, but during the “Readers’ Repetition of the Amidah”, and then at various points thereafter to make up the thirty-note difference. Finally, the last ten blasts of the shofar are sounded prior to Adon Olam (Lord of the World).

The Prophecy

As with all seven feasts of the Lord instituted in Leviticus Chapter 23, there is much Messianic significance in the Feast of Trumpets. As we have already stated, the spring feasts reveal much about the first coming of Messiah. Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits beautifully portray the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Feast of Pentecost is symbolic of the Day of Pentecost in which the Holy Ghost baptized the disciples of the Lord and the Church of was empowered and emboldened as witnesses of Christ Jesus.

Now we come to the fall feasts instituted in the seventh month of Tishri. It is significant to note that the first three feasts were all to be observed in the first month (Nisan), and the last three feasts are observed in the seventh month (Tishri). Seven is the Biblical number of perfection and completion. One might even say that seventh month is the month of complete perfection. Certainly the fall feasts reveal how God's complete and perfect plan will be fulfilled in Christ.

The Feast of Trumpets was instituted as a memorial. It is likely that this feast memorializes the grace of God in the lives of His people. Nowhere in the Word of God do we see this illustrated better than in Genesis 22. Isaac is a type and foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the son of promise born to his father, Abraham, and his mother, Sarah. Jesus is called the only begotten Son of God the Father. Both were sons of promise. Both Isaac and Jesus were conceived through the process of a miracle. Both Isaac and Jesus were obedient to their father to the point of sacrifice.

Hebrews 11:17-19 reveals how Abraham was prepared to offer his son, Isaac. He believed God was able to resurrect Isaac from the dead. In the process of this great event, Jehovah-Jireh ("the Lord will provide") provided a ram caught by its horns in a thicket as a substitute for Isaac. Jesus is the Lamb of God sent to this world to take our place in death. It seems that God has a special affinity with the ram's horn (shofar) since the time of Abraham. The shofar has been used repeatedly throughout the history of Israel. Trumpets have been used for warning, for war, for worship, and for withdraw.

The Feast of Trumpets clearly foreshadows the next great event on God's prophetic calendar – the Rapture of the Church. There is nothing preventing the Rapture to take place. No prophecies need to be fulfilled; no majorevents need to take place. All things are now ready for Jesus Christ to return for His Bride, the Church, but only the Father knows when this event will occur. In all of the dispensations of the Bible, the longest dispensation (age; period of time) is our current dispensation in which we now live. It is known as the Church Age or Dispensation of Grace. It is nearly 2,000 years old. It began with the Day of Pentecost, and it will conclude when Christ returns and catches away His bride. This glorious event is taught in several passages of Scripture.

Shortly before Jesus went to the Cross of Calvary, He taught the doctrine of the Rapture to His disciples. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know” (John 14:1-4). For the first time Jesus spoke of departing to prepare a place for His disciples. He also promised to return to receive them unto Himself.

Paul shed more light upon this great event on God’s prophetic calendar in his epistle to the Corinthian church. “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Notice he mentions the use of the shofar (trumpet), “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

A trumpet will sound, and in the twinkling of an eye, all believers who make up the body of Christ will be ushered out of this present, evil world. The dead shall be raised, and the living will be changed in an instant.

Many members of the Church of Thessalonica were concerned because some of their brethren had died, and the Lord Jesus had not yet come for His bride. What had become of their loved ones who had died prior to the rapture? Paul comforted them with these words, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Paul used the event of the Rapture as a means to comfort the Thessalonian believers. You will notice that the trumpet is again mentioned to commence this wonderful prophetic event, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God...” Surely we all can rejoice with the song writer, “Oh, what a wonderful day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see, and I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace. When He takes me by the hand, and leads me through the Promised Land. What a day, glorious day that will be!”

Let us examine one last passage that sheds further light on this grand and glorious meeting in the air. John, the Beloved Disciple of Jesus Christ, had been exiled on the Isle of Patmos. There, under the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit he wrote the Revelation of Jesus Christ. After writing about “things which he had seen” (past) and “the things which are” (present), he was led by the Spirit to pen the following words about “the things which shall be hereafter” (future). John wrote, “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” John said that the first voice which he heard “was as it were of a trumpet...which said, Come up hither!” John clearly was describing the future event known as the “Rapture”. Again we find that it commences with the sounding of a trumpet! Truly, the Feast of Trumpets or Yom Teruah (the day of the sounding of the shofar) beautifully foreshadows the blessed hope of all believers – the day the Lord Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) will return for His Bride to take her to the place He has gone to prepare for those that love God!

The Jewish wedding also provides a beautiful illustration of the events of the Rapture. When a man in ancient Israel married, he went to the bride’s house with a “bride’s price” and offered it to the father of the bride. If the father accepted the man and his bride’s price, it was received as a covenant or agreement. The young man would then pour a glass of wine. If the young lady drank it, it served to indicate that she accepted the man’s proposal, and they were officially betrothed. The man would then go away to prepare a wedding chamber for his bride. When the man’s father deemed that the wedding chamber was finished and all things were ready (usually one to two years later), he would tell his son to go and get his bride. The man would then return to his bride’s house and “steal her away” like “a thief in the night” at an hour that was unexpected. He would take her to their wedding chamber for a seven-day period to consummate the marriage. At the end of the seventh day, the married couple would emerge from the chamber and celebrate their union with a marriage supper and friends.

In like manner, the Lord Jesus paid the price for His bride by His own precious blood shed on Calvary’s Cross. The covenant between God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son was agreed upon before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). The terms of the contract are contained in several passages of the New Covenant (Testament) - “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9); “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13); “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36); “...him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). The terms of the contract are clearly stated by Jesus Christ Himself – “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, by but me” (John 14:6). Jesus departed almost 2,000 years ago to prepare a place for His bride, the Church (John 14:1-3).

All that awaits Christ’s return for the Church is for the Father to turn and say to Jesus Christ, “Son, go get your Bride!” This is the next great event on God’s prophetic calendar, and it could happen today! After the Rapture, all New Testament believers since Calvary will be immediately be transformed and transported together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. We will go to the place He has prepared

for us and stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where we will be made pure, without blemish or spot. The Marriage of the Lamb will take place, and after seven years of sweet fellowship, we will return with our Lord, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Revelation 19-20 provides details of what will happen after this. Jesus Christ will come to this world a 2nd time and defeat the armies of the Beast, cast the Beast and False Prophet into the Lake of Fire, and rule and reign for a thousand years upon the earth. All of these events begin with a trumpet, and the Feast of Trumpets foreshadows the beginning of all these great future events.

There are other Messianic shadows provided in the Feast of Trumpets. The idea that this is a time of judgment can be viewed as being significant prophetically. There are several future judgments taught in the Word of God. The two most significant are the Judgment Seat of Christ (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10) and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11). The Judgment Seat of Christ is a judgment of “New Testament saints” only. It will take place after the Rapture of the Church and before the Tribulation Period. The Great White Throne Judgment is the judgment of “unbelievers” of all dispensations or ages.

Additional details of the Judgment Seat are revealed in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. Paul teaches that this is a judgment of New Testament believers. Throughout his instructions he mentions many times that it is the believer’s “works” (not sins) that are exposed to fire to determine their sort. Those works done in the flesh are considered wood, hay, and stubble. When put to the fire they burn to ashes. Works done for the honor and glorify of the Lord are compared to gold, silver, and precious stones. When tried by fire they are refined. It is important to notice what Paul says in verse 15 because he clarifies the Judgment Seat of Christ as a judgment of believers. Paul wrote, “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” We are saved by grace through faith, and not of works! Unbelievers will not be so fortunate at their judgment.

Regarding the judgment of unbelievers, John writes, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

It is obvious when one studies prophecy that the Great White Throne Judgment is for “unbelievers of all ages”. When a believer dies, their soul departs to be with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). When an unbeliever dies, their soul goes to a place called “hell” (Luke 16). Some judged at the White Throne Judgment will have survived the Tribulation, but regardless, they will stand before the Lord at this judgment to give an account of themselves. Hebrews 9:27 clearly states, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Whether saved or lost, every person will make this appointment! Like believers, even unbelievers are judged according to their works.

The question of sin has been forever settled by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The only SIN that will send a person to hell is the “sin of unbelief” (John 3:16-18).

The Feast of Trumpets is celebrated as a time for introspection and repentance toward God. This is a good idea for Jews and Gentiles alike for the Word of God declares, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!” (Luke 13:3; 5). But introspection and repentance is not enough. One must “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved” (Acts 16:30-31). Modern Judaism is wrong in thinking that good deeds, keeping mitzvah (commandments), or making amends to those they have wronged will do anything for their spiritual well being. While all of these things are morally good actions, there is not one shred of efficacy attained by good works.

CHAPTER 6

The Day of Atonement

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 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. And ye shall do no work in that same day: For it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.” Leviticus 23:26-32



יום כפור

The Pronouncement

The next feast is called the Day of Atonement and is found in Leviticus 23:26-32. It is commonly referred to by one of the following names: Yom Kippur (Hebrew for Day of



Atonement), the Day of Judgment, or the Sabbath of Sabbaths. It is actually not a feast, but rather a fast.

This holiday is the most solemn holiday of the Jewish calendar. God instructed Israel to keep this feast “a statute forever.” It was on this day that Israel realized atonement for sins, but only for a period of one year. Each year sacrifices had to be offered again by the High Priest and offered in the Holy of Holies. For this reason, the feast is often referred to as the Day of Redemption.

This holiday was a stark reminder to the Jews that daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices made on their behalf were not sufficient to atone for their sin. Judaism instructs that sins can only be forgiven by Jehovah, and then, only as prescribed by Torah (Law). The seriousness of this particular holiday is seen

in the fact that many Jews who do not observe any other feast, will, to this day, refrain from work, fast, and attend synagogue on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

Yom Kippur is observed on the 10th day of Tishri. According to Leviticus 23, it is a day set aside to “afflict the soul” and “to make atonement for sins.” No servile work is to be done during this feast, and



many other Talmudic restrictions have been placed on Jewish people as well. Actions such as bathing, using deodorant or perfumes, wearing leather shoes, and other actions are prohibited because they are considered luxuries.

In ancient Israel, Jewish men were encouraged to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to observe the Day of Atonement. It was a time of fasting, cleansing, and reflection, which was observed annually. Preparation for this important holiday began forty-days earlier and culminated with this important feast. On this day, the High Priest brought atoning blood into the Holy of Holies, the divine throne room of the Tabernacle and the Temple. The worshippers stood “afar off”, unable to approach the presence of God.

The Day of Atonement should have been evidence that there was something missing in the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law. Although Israel offered a multitude of sacrifices throughout the year, only on the Day of Atonement were sins considered atoned by Law. This feast reveals the weakness of the Law as a means of redemption. Hebrews 10:4 states, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” The sins in the Old Testament economy were only redeemed or atoned for “temporarily”. These sacrifices were only shadows of the greatest Sacrifice of all, which was to come – Jesus Christ, The Lamb of God. The Lord Jesus would offer Himself as the “One Sacrifice for sins forever” (Hebrews 10:12).

The Practice

The Day of Atonement is actually a “fast,” not a “feast.” Judaism has long prescribed that penitential prayer, reading Scriptures, confessing sins, and fasting should all be observed during Yom Kippur.

Judaism derives at this conclusion because the Torah states that on this day, “ye shall afflict your souls” (Leviticus 23:27; 32). Rabbis have interpreted this to mean, “fasting.” In Biblical times rending one’s garments and putting on sackcloth and ashes served as evidence of self-affliction. In Biblical days, failure to afflict one’s soul on the Day of Atonement meant expulsion from among the people of Israel (Leviticus 23:29). There was no work done on this day. It was considered an annual Sabbath (Leviticus 23:24-25; 30). The holiday begins on the of 9th Tishri at evening and continued unto the evening of the Tishri 10 (Leviticus 23:32).

Leviticus 16 gives us additional details of Jewish practices on the Day of Atonement. During the Temple era, this holiday was quite elaborate. The High Priest was entirely responsible for conducting the service. He began his preparations a week in advance, remaining in the High Priest's chamber located in the Temple court. There he would spend time reviewing and studying the laws of the feast. It was extremely important that he follow every detail of the Law. Any mistake could literally cost him his life and the nation of Israel's atonement.

On this day the High Priest spoke the word that was considered unspeakable at all other times throughout the year. During the services he spoke the name YHWH (Jehovah) on ten separate occasions during the course of the ceremony. To this day, Jews hesitate to even write the word of God, preferring rather to spell it "G-d", for fear of misspelling the name. In Judaism there is a healthy "respect" for the very name of God, not often realized in other religions. When the congregation of Israel heard the High Priest speak the name of God, they would all fall to the ground in reverence.



On the Day of Atonement the High Priest would enter the porch of the Temple, pass through gilded doors decorated with flowers, palm trees, and cherubim, and enter the main room of the Temple called the Holy Place. Beyond the Holy Place was a veil, and behind it was a room no Jew, not even ordinary priests, would ever see in their lifetime. It was a perfectly square room, nearly 35 feet by 35 feet, called the Holy of Holies. In it was located the Ark of the Covenant containing three items – the tablets of stone (Law), pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. This room was only entered into once a year by the High Priest and only on the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest wore special articles of clothing on this solemn day. He wore a "golden crown" upon his head, a "breastplate" upon his heart, and the "Cohein Gadol" (Techlet robe) decorated with pomegranates and bells.

The people could listen to the bells while the priest was in the Holy of Holies to know he was still alive. The High Priest also wore an "apron or vest", four "white garments" made from white flax, a special "belt", a "turban", and a special pair of "linen breeches or pants."

While Leviticus 23:26-32 illustrated the need for Jews to recognize their sins; Leviticus 16 provided the method by which God would atone Israel's sins. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest offered sacrifices for the congregation of Israel. Such sacrifices only "covered" their sins for a period of one year, so sacrifice had to be offered repeatedly each year.

The High Priest would offer a bullock as a sin offering for himself and for the priesthood (Leviticus 16:6). He would fill the censor with live coals from the brazen altar and then enter the Holy of Holies where he placed incense on the coals. The incense sent forth a cloud of smoke over the mercy seat, which served as the cover or lid of the Ark. The High Priest would then take the blood of the bullock and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat and upon the ground in front of the ark. This blood served as a cleansing atonement of his own defilement. He then offered burnt offerings – 7 male lambs (one year old), 1 young bull, and 1 ram. The sin offering was 1 male goat. Every step he took was precisely scripted and rehearsed beforehand. By the end of the Day of Atonement, the High Priest made a total of 43 trips between the court and the sanctuary of the Temple.

Ten (10) times he would speak the name YHWH (Jehovah) on the Day of Atonement– six times in connection with the bullock, three times in connection with the he-goat, and once in connection with the lots. Those who were near him would fall on their faces in reverence, and those far away, upon seeing the others fall down, would cry out, “Blessed be His name whose glorious kingdom is forever and ever.”

After purifying the holy place and the altar of burnt offering with the blood of the bullock, the High Priest went to the eastern side of the court in front of the Temple. Facing him were two identical goats. According to Leviticus 16:7-10, he would cast lots upon the two goats. A nearby lottery box was especially designated for this ceremony. In the box were two tablets (lots). One bore the name “For God”, and the other “For Azazel” (scapegoat). The High Priest shook the box and withdrew the tablets, putting one tablet in front of each goat. The goat labeled “For God” was sacrificed. The High Priest laid his hands upon the goat’s head labeled “For Azazel” and confessed the sins of Israel over it. The scapegoat symbolically bore the sins of the nation of Israel. This goat commonly was then driven away into the wilderness.

Tradition states that a cord of red wool was tied on the horn of the scapegoat before it was released into the wilderness. When the red wool turned white, it was considered a sign that God had forgiven the sins of Israel. Isaiah 1:18 says, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Tradition also teaches that the High Priest bound a crimson strip of cloth on the outside door of the Temple. If the strip of cloth turned white, the people would rejoice that their sins had been forgiven. If the strip of crimson cloth did not turn white, the people would be full of sorrow and shame. Jewish literature explains that the Shekinah glory of God left the Temple forty years prior to its destruction in A.D. 70. Some rabbis teach that there were three evidences of the departure of God’s glory. 1) The western candle of the menorah no longer burned continually 2) The doors of the Temple would open by themselves 3) The red cloth no longer turned white. Some believe that Jehovah no longer forgave the sins of His people after that time. Interestingly, it was during this same year that Jesus began His public ministry. Only the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God can atone for sins.

Since 70 AD, Israel has been without a Temple and sacrificial worship. Modern Judaism has modified many of the practices in the observance of Yom Kippur. We have already discussed the 40-day season of Teshuvah. This period of time is observed in order to prepare one's heart for the most solemn holiday of the Jewish calendar – The Day of Atonement. The Feast of Trumpets and the blowing of the shofar daily in the synagogue during this 40-day period serve as a call to reflection, repentance, and personal revival. It is a serious time of year for all Jews, even those who are not usually religious.

Before sundown on the 9th of Tishri, the eve of Yom Kippur, Jewish homes will eat a special meal because of the traditional 25-hour fast that follows. After dinner, the family will light the festival candles and say a special Kiddush (blessing) to begin the observance of the holiday. Many families will say a prayer over each of their children, and bless their parents and spouses.

Though the fast lasts a total of 25-hours, certain exceptions are allowed. Those who are ill, those who are pregnant, and children are permitted to observe what is termed as a “Daniel’s Fast.” This fast consists of eating vegetables (Daniel 1:12-15) and water for the duration of the fast. Many rabbinical laws are associated with fasting. All Jewish males over the age of 13 and Jewish girls over the age of 12 are encouraged to observe mandatory fasts. In order to train and discipline younger children, rabbis encourage partial fasts to be observed. Fasting is considered a means of focusing the mind on Jehovah and Torah. Entertainment of any sort is considered inappropriate during a fast.

The denial of pleasurable acts during Yom Kippur is especially designed to maintain focus on moral purification and dedication to the pursuit of moral character. Those on medication, of course, are permitted to take their prescriptions and eat small amounts of food and drink, but only on the advice of their doctors and rabbis. Those who are very ill are forbidden to fast altogether.

On the evening of the 10th of Tishri, a special evening service called “Kol Nidre” is conducted at the synagogue. Special Yom Kippur services are held throughout the day as well. The shofar is blown to assemble the people for worship. The Kol Nidre (“all vows”) is chanted or sung in a sorrowful traditional melody. In this song Jews ask forgiveness of God for breaking any vows they were unable to fulfill during the course of the year. The rabbi declares a “decree of reprieve” three times. Orthodox Jews traditionally spend the night in synagogue reciting Torah readings and the entire Book of Psalms. Sephardic and Reform Jews recite memorial prayers on this night as well.

The common greeting of the day is “Gemar Hatimah Tovah” (“May you be finally sealed for good”). It is customary to wear white clothing on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) to symbolize purity. Many men wear a “kittel,” a white robe used to bury the dead. Leather shoes are replaced with canvas or non-leather shoes or slippers before leaving the synagogue. Jewish men wear their Tallit (prayer shawl) continuously during the services. Synagogue furnishings are customarily draped in white (as on the Feast of Trumpets). The “Viddui” (“confession of sins”) begins with the immersion of repentance. The Viddui is recited 10 times on the Day of Atonement to coincide with the tradition of the High Priest pronouncing the name of God ten times during the Temple era. Most Jews spend much of the day in prayer, asking God to forgive them for sins.

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the only day of the year (in modern-day Israel) when restaurants, theaters, shops, stores, offices, factories, and even television and radio stations close down for more than 24 hours. Without a Temple and sacrificial worship, fasting and refraining from work is about all they believe they can do to observe this important feast. The fast of Yom Kippur is the only fast day that is never postponed, even if it coincides with a weekly Sabbath. Anyone can attend the synagogue on the Day of Atonement, even if the congregation has previously barred him or her. The mere presence of a person who has been barred is viewed as a desire to repent and return to God. At the conclusion of Yom Kippur it has become the common practice in all movements of Judaism to begin construction on the family “Sukkah.” We will examine this custom in our next chapter.

The Prophecy

There are several foreshadowings of Messiah in the Day of Atonement. We as believers know well that redemption is made possible only by the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul clearly stated this important theological truth in his epistle to the Romans, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:23-26).

All of the sacrifices during the Old Testament economy were merely shadows of the Christ who came to offer Himself as the supreme Sacrifice for all mankind. His death both surpassed and replaced all the atoning rituals of the Law. The Book of Hebrews explains in detail the superiority of Christ - “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou



prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:1-7).

Throughout the Book of Hebrews, the writer repeatedly illustrates that the blood offered by Jesus Christ was greater than the blood of bulls and of goats. Those sacrifices were offered year after year. God ordained them in order to remind Israel that their sins were ever present, and they needed a sacrifice that would forever satisfy His righteousness and cleanse their sins. The sacrifices of bulls and of goats were but “shadows of good things to come.” “The good things to come” have been provided by the Lamb of God – Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah).

When the High Priest offered sacrifices on the Day of Atonement, he alone went beyond the veil into the very presence of God. No other person in Israel could go into the Holy of Holies without penalty of death. Sin always hinders a person from approaching God. The Day of Atonement served Israel as a constant reminder that their human tendencies were always toward sin and iniquity, not righteousness and holiness. Each year the nation was reminded that they were unable to provide atonement for themselves. The Day of Atonement should have caused the Jewish people to understand the inadequacies of the blood of bulls and goats. If it had been sufficient, there would not have been reason to offer the same sacrifices every year. Instead, many Jews prided themselves in their religious orthodoxy as a means of God’s acceptance.

Messiah is the fulfillment of all these shadows. When Christ died on Calvary, the veil of the Temple was ripped apart, allowing access to God through His Son Jesus Christ. Matthew records this great event, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:50-53).

The atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus forever removed the barrier between mankind and the presence of God. One need only receive the Jesus Christ as Savior to have immediate access to the throne room of grace. No longer is it necessary to observe the Day of Atonement. No longer do the sacrifices of bulls and goats make temporary atonement for sins. The writer of Hebrews clearly expressed this truth in one simple verse – “But this man [Jesus], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12).

He also wrote, “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for

the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:11-15).

The Levitical offerings only purified the flesh. The sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer allowed the sinner to be ceremonially cleansed and able to offer sacrifices and observe certain rituals. However, those sacrifices never brought about inward cleansing of the heart, something that is prerequisite for reconciliation to God. All of the high priests had to be cleansed of sin before they could enter into the Holy of Holies and live. Christ was without spot and without blemish. Only because of His perfect offering was He able to die for the sins of the world, be buried, descend into the earth, and live again!

Paul wrote of this to the Roman believers, “And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). The Apostle John also wrote, “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...” (Revelation 1:5-6), and “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18). The believer in Christ no longer stands afar off as some did in the Temple era. In Jesus Christ all have complete and total access unto the Father and unto the throne of grace.

The “scapegoat” is also a marvelous illustration of Messiah. As we have already discussed in this chapter, the high priest would cast lots upon two goats that were brought before him. The goat in which the lot fell was sacrificed, and the other goat remained alive and became the scapegoat. The high priest would lay his hands upon the head of the scapegoat and confess the sins of the nation of Israel. Ceremonially, the sins of the people were transferred (imputed) to the scapegoat. The scapegoat was then driven into the wilderness symbolizing that the sins of Israel were forgiven and remembered no more by God.

In the same way, the Lord Jesus was brought before Pilate and stood before the congregation of Israel. He was led forth, outside the city, bearing the sins and iniquities of the people. Even though there were two goats involved in the scapegoat ceremony, both goats portrayed our Lord. Jesus not only died the death we deserved to die, but as our Sacrifice, He also rose again on the third day. He was set free! He conquered death, hell, and the grave. The grave could not hold Him! Nothing could prevent Him from rising from the dead, and thus become our Redeemer! This was the purpose of His coming from the very foundation of the world.

He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). He further declared, “Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). He told His disciples that He would die and rise again on the third day. He taught them that His resurrection guaranteed eternal life to all who received Him by grace through faith.

Messiah made two promises before He returned unto the Father. He promised to send the Comforter (Holy Ghost), and He promised that one day He would come again. John 14:3 says, “And if I go and

prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Many Bible scholars consider the Day of Atonement to be a foreshadowing of Messiah’s Second Coming. Scriptures clearly teach that the Lord Jesus Christ will come for His Bride - the Church, seven years prior to His Second Coming. If the Feast of Trumpets foreshadows this blessed hope of all New Testament saints (and I believe it does), then the Ten Days of Awe, the days between the Feast of Trumpets and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) most likely foreshadow the Tribulation (the period known as the Time of Jacob’s Trouble or the Seventieth Week of Daniel – ref. Daniel 9:24-27). The Day of Atonement then foreshadows the Second Coming of Messiah. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus Christ will come again. He will destroy the armies of the Antichrist, deliver Israel from the “Times of the Gentiles”, and reign for a thousand years in what is called the Millennial Kingdom.

How does the Day of Atonement relate to the world today? The Day of Atonement was a reminder to the nation of Israel that daily, weekly, monthly, and even annual sacrifices were not sufficient to atone for their sins forever. The Law could never “take away sins”. In this same light, everyone should realize that we cannot “work our way to heaven.” The fact remains that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Mankind is inherently sinful and needs a Savior. We are completely and utterly unable to save ourselves. Man’s righteousness is utter unrighteousness to God! “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities” (Isaiah 64:6-7). Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 declare, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Paul wrote a 14-fold indictment of the sinfulness of man when he penned these words in his epistle to the Romans, “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:10-18).

Later in the same epistle Paul wrote, “Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Mankind descended from a sinner named Adam. Because Adam was a sinner, we are born in sin. Because we are born sinners, we must be “born-again.” This is the clear teaching of God’s Word concerning sin and salvation.

Jesus Christ provided the world with both a perfect Sacrifice (Himself) and a perfect means of atonement by His resurrection. Paul wrote, “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:23-25). The most important decision anyone will make is what he or she will do with Jesus

Christ, the Son of God. Have YOU called upon the name of the Lord Jesus for salvation? The Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Romans 10:13) Invite Jesus into your heart right now!

The Torah is clear about this important theological fact. Leviticus 17:11 teaches, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” No where in Scripture does God’s Word teach that giving to charities, keeping mitzvahs, making restitution for wrongs done in the flesh, or standing in running water emptying one’s pockets make atonement for the soul. God emphatically instructs mankind that it is “BLOOD that maketh atonement for the soul.” The very BEST that man can do is still the best that MAN can do. Jeremiah 17:9 declares, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Man’s heart is inherently sinful – deceitful and wicked! The Apostle Paul wrote, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Even the Jewish practice of Teshuvah, the forty-day season of preparation for Yom Kippur, is seen to foreshadow prophetic events. The thirty days of blowing the trumpet during the month of Elul depicts the Church Age and our responsibility to “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). This is the great commandment that God gave to the Church – to preach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Revelation 10:11).

The Feast of Trumpets (Tishri 1) foreshadows the Rapture of the Church, an event preceded by the sounding of a trumpet, followed by the Lord’s return for His bride. The ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, the Days of Awe, foreshadow the “Time of Jacob’s Trouble” – The Tribulation. During this time God will pour out several judgments upon the inhibitors of the earth. Death and devastation will result in revival among God’s chosen people, Israel.

The Day of Atonement foreshadows the Second Coming of the Messiah. At the end of the Great Tribulation the Lord Yeshua will come riding on a white horse and destroy all that refused to obey the truth (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). John wrote concerning this event, “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7). As we will see later in this study, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, a time when Christ will rule and reign on the earth from the throne of His father David for a thousand years. The Church, the Bride of Christ, will rule and reign with Him.

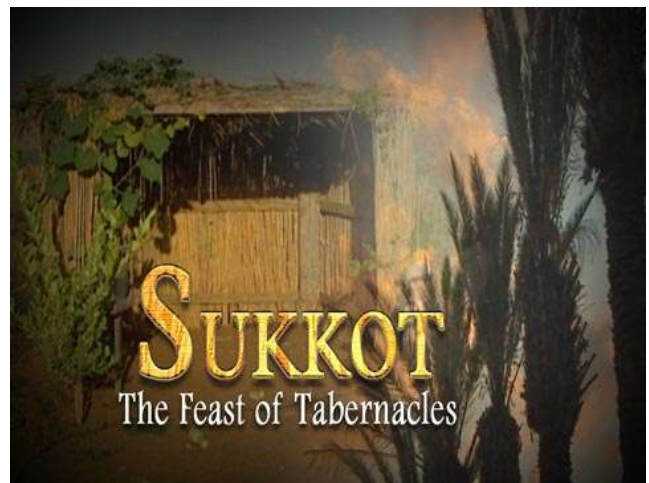
CHAPTER 7

The Feast of Tabernacles

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day. Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.”

Leviticus 23:33-44



סוכות

The Pronouncement

The seventh feast is called the Feast of Tabernacles, though modern Judaism often calls it “Sukkot.” It is amazing how the Lord instituted the Feast of Tabernacles (a joyous celebration) immediately after the Day of Atonement (the most solemn of feasts). This name “Sukkot” is derived from the commandment

for Israel to build small shelters or booths called “sukkahs” (Hebrew for booths). During this weeklong harvest festival, Jewish families use Sukkahs to observe the festival. The Feast of Tabernacles is sometimes called The Feast of Ingathering or The Feast of Booths. The name Sukkoth or Succoth are variations that occur in the spelling of the Hebrew transliteration for the word pronounced, “sue-coat”. The two days following the Feast of Tabernacles are Shemini Atzeret and Simkhat Torah. These are actually separate holidays, but are usually considered part of the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) is the final feast instituted in Leviticus Chapter 23. Several new holidays have been added to the Jewish calendar over the centuries, but only these seven are the Feasts of the Lord. Like the first six feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles was ordained by God, given to Moses as part of Torah (Law), and observed annually by the nation of Israel.

The Feast of Tabernacles began five days after the Day of Atonement on the 15th day of Tishri. Like the first three feasts observed in the first month (Nisan), the last three feasts are all observed in the seventh month (Tishri) of the Jewish calendar. Only Pentecost is observed in a month by itself. The number seven is an important number – it denotes the idea of perfection or completion. One might say that the Lord revealed the complete perfection of His will by instituting seven feasts for the nation of Israel to observe. It is a certainty that all of these feasts collectively foreshadow God’s perfect plan for the ages. Beginning with the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, the feasts culminate with the Second Coming of Lord to set up His Kingdom on earth.

The Feast of Tabernacles has a dual significance. It is both historical and agricultural as is also the feasts of Passover and Pentecost. Historically, the Feast of Tabernacles is a feast kept in remembrance of how the Israel dwelled in tents during their forty-years of wilderness wanderings after their exodus from Egypt. Agriculturally, it is a feast that celebrates the fall harvest and God’s bountiful supply for His people. This is the reason that the Feast of Tabernacles is also referred to in Hebrew as Zeman Simkhateinu, (Season of Rejoicing).

Leviticus 23:41-43 reveals both the purpose and origin of the feast. God said, “And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations; ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

Matthew Henry gives a very insightful commentary on the Feast of Tabernacles: “The meanness of their beginning, and the low and desolate state out of which God advanced that people. Note: Those that are comfortably fixed ought often to call to mind their former unsettled state, when they were but little in their own eyes. The mercy of God to them, that, when they dwelt in tabernacles, God not only set up a tabernacle for Himself among them, but, with the utmost care and tenderness imaginable, hung a canopy over them, even the cloud that sheltered them from the heat of the sun. God’s former mercies to us and our fathers ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance. The eighth day was the great day of

this holiday, because then they returned to their own houses again, and remembered how, after they had long dwelt in tents in the wilderness, at length they came to a happy settlement in the land of promise, where they dwelt in goodly houses. And they would the more sensibly value and be thankful for the comforts and conveniences of their houses when they had been seven days dwelling in booths. It is good for those that have ease and plenty sometimes to learn what it is to endure hardness.

They were to keep this holiday in thankfulness to God for all the increase of the year; however, the emphasis is that Israel's life rested upon redemption, which in its ultimate meaning is the forgiveness of sin. This fact separates this holiday from the harvest festivals of the neighboring nations whose roots lay in the mythological activity of the gods."

It is interesting to notice how similar the celebration of our American Thanksgiving is to the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. Pilgrims who left England and came to America were deeply religious people. It has been recorded that when they landed in the new world, they wanted to express their thanksgiving to the Lord for preserving their lives on the dangerous Atlantic crossing, as well as for the bountiful harvest of food. Many believe that they decided that the appropriate method of expressing their thanks was taken from Leviticus 23:39 – "Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath." Obviously, American Thanksgiving is not observed exactly as the Feast of Tabernacles, but one can see that the origin of Thanksgiving could have been based in part on this feast.

The Practice

According to Leviticus 23:33-44, Israel was to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in the following manner: Israel lived in booths (sukkahs) made of boughs of trees and branches of palm trees for the seven days of the feast. They rested from all servile work on the first and eighth days. The high priest offered sacrifices on each of the seven days, beginning with 13 bullocks and other animals on the first day and reducing the number of bullocks sacrificed by one each day until, on the seventh day, seven bullocks were offered.

On the eighth day there was a solemn assembly, and the priest offered 1 bullock, 1 ram, and 7 lambs (Numbers 29:36) – the total number of animals sacrificed during the Feast of Tabernacles was 189 animals. Men carried a lulav (Four Species) – a cluster of branches made of palm, myrtle, willow, and citron fruit. These lulavs were waved as the men rejoiced before the Lord as commanded in Leviticus 23:40.

Water was also an important part of the Feast of Tabernacles. Before the festival was observed, rabbis taught on every passage of Scripture that dealt with the subject of water. In Old Testament times, golden pitchers were brought from the pool of Siloam to the Temple. The high priest would pour the

water of the pitchers upon the altar to signify Israel's thankfulness for the rain that was supplied to produce their harvest. It was not uncommon for the high priest to recite the following passage from the Book of Isaiah: "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out at the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:1-3). The ceremony lasted a total of seven days. The last day was called Hosha'na Rabba, meaning the "Day of the Great Hosanna." The priests of the Temple blew trumpets and branches were waved as the people sang the "Great Hallel" – Psalms 113-118.



Jewish observances today are quite different in absence of a Temple and sacrificial worship. No water is poured out of golden pitchers upon an altar; no animals are sacrificed; and few pilgrimages are made to Jerusalem. Most Jews no longer farm; therefore, many Jews, have difficulty in relating to harvesting at all, with the exception of the traditional use of the etrog, the lulov, the arava, and the hadas – collectively called "The Four Species."

The etrog is a citrus fruit native to Israel; the lulov is a palm branch; the arava are two willow branches; and the "hadas" are three myrtle branches. The six branches are bound together and collectively called the "lulov." Modern rabbis insist that this is the only acceptable lulov, but the Scriptures say differently – "And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days" (Leviticus 23:40). When Ezra reinstated the feasts, he used olive branches as part of the lulov (Nehemiah 8:15).

Jews will hold the etrog (pitom or tip pointing downward) in their left hand and the lulov (spine upward) in their right hand. There are two (2) blessings offered at this time. The first one offered is, "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by His commandments, and instructed us concerning the waving of the palm branch." The second one offered is called the Shehekeyanu. It states, "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, for keeping us in life, for sustaining us, and for helping us reach this day," is recited immediately following this blessing. The etrog is then turned upward and shaken with the lulov. The lulov is waved in all four directions – N, S, E, and W symbolizing that YHWH is everywhere.

In the days of Temple worship, the people of Israel would enter the courtyard of the Temple on each day of the Feast of Tabernacles. With their lulav and etrog in hand, they would make a circular procession around the altar. During the procession they would pray a prayer that has become known as the “Hoshanos” – a prayer for God’s blessing, ending each phrase with the word “Hashanah”, meaning “save now”. On the first six days they would march around the altar one time, but on the seventh day they marched around it seven times. Traditionally, Psalm 27 is recited during the service of the Feast of Tabernacles.

There is thought to be spiritual significance based on the characteristics of the Four Species – the lulav and the etrog. The lulav (palm branch) bears fruit (deeds) but is not fragrant (spiritual blessing). This is like a person who lives by the letter of the law but does not have compassion or love for others. The hadas (myrtle branches) has fragrance, but it cannot bear fruit. This is like a person who is “heavenly minded, but no earthly good;” like a person who can



memorize and recite Scripture, but does not produce personal fruit. The arava (willow branches) is neither fragrant nor able to produce fruit. This can be compared to a person who is religious, but lost; like a person who is intrigued with different doctrines, but never produces fruit. The etrog (citron fruit) is like a faithful believer who lives a balanced life in wisdom and love before God and man. We should all strive to be like the etrog – sweet savor unto the Lord that is fruit bearing. James penned a familiar verse of Scripture that reinforces this thought – “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without works, and I will show thee my faith by my works”... “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:18; 20)

Modern Judaism continues to observe the Torah command to dwell in booths (sukkahs). Families enjoy building their sukkahs as a enjoyable project in which all get involved. This project usually begins immediately after the fasting of the Day of Atonement. Rabbis have added specific details about the size, materials, and location for the building of these shelters. Rabbinical edict states that each sukkah must have at least 3 walls and be large enough for one to dwell inside. The roof of the sukkah must be made of a material referred to as sekhakh



(covering); this means that the roof must be made of something that grew from the ground and was cut off (i.e. - tree branches, corn stalks, bamboo reeds, sticks, or even two-by-fours). The sekhakh must be loose; not tied down or together so that rain can get in and so that stars can be seen at night. The sekhakh must be the last part of the sukkah completed. Often families will decorate their sukkah with items common to the American Thanksgiving Day observance – gourds, pumpkins, ears of corn, and corn stalks. Some families spend at least one entire night inside their sukkah during the seven-day festival. Many other activities are enjoyed by the family include praising God in song, waving lulavs eating, drinking, relaxing, napping, reading the Scriptures, stringing lights, pouring water out of pitchers, and family devotions that teach stories of how God met the needs of their ancestors.

The Prophecy

The Feast of Tabernacles teaches several spiritual truths about Jehovah. The feast reminds the Jewish people how God took care of their ancestors throughout the forty-years of wilderness wanderings. It also instructs them how Jehovah kept His promise to Israel by allowing them to enter into the land flowing with milk and honey. God blessed Israel physically and agriculturally so long as they remained faithful to His Word. The Feast of Tabernacles serves as a time of rejoicing for the goodness of God.

As New Testament believers, we can glean many spiritual lessons from the Jewish feast. The Feast of Tabernacles reminds us not to hold too tightly to worldly possessions. Unfortunately, we live in a materialistic age. Christians should never love the things of this world more than the things of God. The Apostle John wrote, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Israel had to dwell in sukkahs (booths) while they wandered in the wilderness. None of the Jews had lavish homes and large possessions of things. God allowed them to experience these years in order to teach them to appreciate the Promised Land they would enter. Possessions can control and manipulate us. Too often believers become slaves to such idols as automobiles, houses, bank accounts, and such. Our Lord Jesus warned of the danger of material possessions, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36-37)

God desires us to “set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). God promised to “supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). The Lord Jesus taught how God cares for the birds of the air, the lilies, and the grass of the field. He instructed His listeners to take no thought of what they should eat or drink. He said that all these things are sought after by the world and the Father knew as believers had need of these things. Then the Lord

said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

The Feast of Tabernacles reminded Israel that the Lord Jehovah is their strength, their shelter, and their refuge in times of storm. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall” (Isaiah 25:4). This is also a valuable truth for all who have claimed the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our rock, our refuge, and our shelter in the times of storm.

Another great spiritual lesson learned in the Feast of Tabernacles has to do with water. As we have already mentioned, the high priest would bring water from the pool of Siloam in gold pitchers and pour it upon the altar of the Temple. Rabbis would instruct their followers about passages of Scripture that deal with water, especially as it refers to the harvesting of crops. Our Lord Jesus also used living water as metaphor for the salvation He offers to the world. When speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well He said, “...Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13-14). When the woman spoke of the coming of Messiah, Jesus verified who is was by saying, “...I that speak unto thee am he” (John 4:26). Messiah Jesus is the “Living Water” that cleanses us daily after we have been saved. Seated at the right hand of the Father on High, our Great High Priest ever makes intercession unto the Father on our behalf (Hebrews 7:25). “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:13-14).

In ancient Temple times, Israel would hang illuminated baskets of light in the corners of the city on the Feast of Tabernacles. Men were assigned to each of these large luminaries to maintain them during the celebration of the feast. The light from the Feast of Tabernacles lamps foreshadowed Christ. Many Bible scholars suggest that Jesus referred to this custom when He spoke the words, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Jesus revealed to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, let his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:16-21).

The commandment of Israel to dwell in booths is also a beautiful illustration of the present circumstances of Israel and New Testament believers. Israel is currently scattered among the nations of

the world. Only since May 14, 1948, have the Jewish people recognized homeland. However, more Jews still live outside of Israel than live inside its boundaries. As a matter of fact, more Jews live in the United States than in any country of the world. Israel still waits for the day when the “Times of the Gentiles” will be fulfilled (Luke 21:24). They are looking for the coming of Mashiach Ben David (Messiah the Son of David) who they believe will deliver them from Gentile oppression. The Feast of Tabernacles serves as a reminder that just as God allowed them to wander forty-years in the wilderness then permitted them to dwell in the Promised Land, so one day, Messiah will establish His Kingdom, and Israel will dwell safely in their land once more.

New Testament believers ought to be reminded by the Feast of Tabernacles that this world is not our home. Like Israel, we too are strangers and pilgrims living in this present evil world. We long for the time when our faith will become sight, and we will no longer “see through a glass darkly.” The writer of Hebrews wrote, “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:14). The Lord Jesus Christ told His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3). Paul wrote, “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

He further wrote of the Second Coming of Christ, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:22-25). To the Corinthians Paul wrote, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For this we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (2 Corinthians 5:1-2).

The Lord Jesus is now preparing our permanent dwelling place with Him. It is difficult, but we must wait with patience for it! Just like Israel who wandered 40 years in the wilderness, believers too have a blessed hope, a place much better than our current one. While dwelling in temporary booths, they longed for the day they would enter into the land of promise. We too dwell in temporary booths – our mortal bodies. These bodies, infirmed as they are, will one day be changed incorruptible, immortal, without disease and pains. Like Israel, we have been delivered out of bondage; Israel’s the bondage of slavery, and ours the bondage of sin. Greater is He that is in us, than he (devil) that is in the world.

In Christ, we have been we have been delivered from the penalty of sin (positional sanctification). As we grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord and yield ourselves daily unto the Spirit of God within us, we are delivered from the power of sin (progressive sanctification). Praise God, one day we shall be delivered from the very presence of sin (prophetic sanctification)!

All of the fall festivals speak of a time when God will once again tabernacle among men. On that glorious day when Messiah returns a second time to this earth, all nations will gather to Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:22; 14:16). John wrote, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:3). During the Millennial Kingdom upon this earth, Yeshua HaMashiach (Jesus the Messiah) will rule and reign from the throne in Jerusalem. Zechariah reveals that people from all of the nations of the whole world will come to Jerusalem and observe the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16).

The Feast of Tabernacles and Passover are the only two (2) feasts of the Lord mentioned in Millennial worship (Ezekiel 45:21-25; Zechariah 14:16). Some Bible scholars believe that Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles and died during Passover. Passover is observed in the first month of the Jewish religious calendar, and the Feast of Tabernacles is observed in the first month of the Jewish civil calendar. The prophet Hosea spoke of a two-fold coming of Messiah – “Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (Hosea 6:3).

Zechariah informs us that during the Millennial Kingdom, when Jesus Christ tabernacles among men a second time, that the nations of the world will observe the Feast of Tabernacles – that great feast that portrays the very presence Messiah (the Tabernacle of God). Great penalty will befall countries that do not send delegates to the feast. Listen to the words of Zechariah as he describes the Battle of Armageddon and the ensuing Millennial Kingdom:

“And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin’s gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague. And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the

plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:8-19).

Many scholars believe Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles. Though most of the Christian world celebrates the birth of Jesus on December 25th, it is interesting to examine the possibility of His birth during the fall festival of Tabernacles. Just as Jesus is said to be our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) and the Firstfruits of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:20), it stands to reason that His birth may have fulfilled the Feast of Tabernacles.

He is the Bread of Life and was born in the town of Bethlehem (literally means “House of Bread”). Does it seem improbable that He could have been born during the feast that celebrates the time when God will tabernacle among man? As a matter of fact, Isaiah wrote, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew’s record of this child brought forth was called by both names – JESUS and Emmanuel (Matthew 1:21-23).

The Word of God does not provide us with the exact date of the birth of Jesus, but by examining correlating passages of Scripture, we find an interesting discovery. We know that the birth of Jesus could not have been during the winter months because the sheep were in the pasture (Luke 2:8). A careful study of the conception of John the Baptist reveals that he was conceived around Sivan 30 (third month of the Jewish calendar – May/June). This would have been the eleventh week of the year using Nisan as the first month of the Jewish calendar. When Zechariah was ministering in the Temple, he received the announcement from God that his wife would bear him a son. According to Jewish literature, this would have been the week of Sivan 12-18. Add forty weeks for a normal pregnancy and the time of the birth of John the Baptist would have been on or about Passover (Nisan 14). Scripture reveals that six months after his birth, Mary conceived Jesus (Luke 1:26-33). This means that Jesus’ conception was in the month of Kislev (sixth month of the Jewish calendar). The date of Kislev 25 is the beginning of Hanukkah (the Festival of Lights). Could it be possible that the “Light of the world” was conceived on the Festival of Lights?

Starting at Kislev 25 (Hanukkah) and continuing for eight days, and then counting the nine months of a normal pregnancy, one arrives at the approximate time of the birth of Jesus. It would appear that it is possible that Jesus was actually born in the early fall of the year in the month of Tishri. This would put it within days of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Further evidence that Jesus may have been born during the Feast of Tabernacles is the fact that Mary and Joseph could not find any rooms in Bethlehem. God required all male Jews to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. This is one of the three pilgrimage feasts. Bethlehem is only about five miles from the city of Jerusalem, and with so many visitors, it would explain why no rooms were available to them (Luke 2:7). Mary and Joseph may have been given shelter in a “sukkah”. The Hebrew word for stable is sukkah, and no doubt there were many of them during the Feast of

Tabernacles. Scripture teaches us that Jesus was put into a “temporary body” when He came to earth. It may very well have been possible that He was placed that night in a “temporary dwelling” used for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Some would argue that this could not have been the time because of the mandate to register and pay taxes. It was a common practice for officials to require taxes to be paid whenever there was a Temple feast because of convenience. In those days travel was difficult (Luke 2:1).

Another belief that supports the that Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles is the fact that Mary and Joseph took the child and fled to Egypt and remain there until God told them that Herod was dead. Joseph and Mary brought the baby Jesus into Jerusalem forty days from His birth for Mary’s purification and the child’s dedication. According to Torah (Law), this had to be done within forty-days of the birth of a male child. Failure to do this would have been considered a sin. This indicates that Herod died within the same forty days.

Later in his life, Jesus celebrated His birthday on a mountain with three of His disciples – Peter, James, and John. On the Feast of Tabernacles, Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration before Christ and His disciples. Upon seeing the Shekinah glory upon the Lord and hearing the voice of God, as well as recognizing the two prophets, Peter wanted to build three (3) sukkahs required for the festival. What Peter did not realize was that James, John, and he was fulfilling that which the feast literally symbolized spiritually. These three disciples, like all believers today, were dwelling in “temporary dwellings” waiting their “eternal resurrected temples” that will be fully realized one day soon!

Conclusion

The study of the Seven Feasts of the Lord is a fascinating endeavor. There is a wealth of instruction for believers in the types and foreshadows of the observances of Judaism. Just as Christ is foreshadowed in Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits, Pentecost provides a wonderful portrait of the New Testament church made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have trusted Jesus as Lord and Saviour (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Likewise, the length of time between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets foreshadows the Dispensation of Grace in which we now live. The longest span of time between any two feasts is the period between Pentecost and Trumpets. The longest dispensation is our current dispensation called the “Church Age.” The Church Age will conclude when Jesus Christ returns in the clouds and His Bride, the Church, will rise to meet Him in the air (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Those left behind after the Rapture of the Church will enter the period known as “The Time of Jacob’s Trouble”; “The 70th Week of Daniel”; and the “Tribulation.”

The Jewish custom referred to as “Teshuvah” is a time of introspection and repentance in preparation of the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is the most solemn feast of the Jewish calendar. In biblical times, “atonement” was made on behalf of the entire nation of Israel on this day. The forty-day period of Teshuvah, especially the last ten called the “Days of Awe,” foreshadow the Tribulation that follows the Rapture. The Day of Atonement foreshadows the Second Coming of Messiah. When Messiah returns, “all Israel will be saved” (Romans 11:26).

The last feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, provides a beautiful picture of the Millennial Kingdom. During Messiah’s 1,000 year reign on earth, all nations will observe two feasts annually – Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. As commanded by the LORD, Israel will observe Passover as a memorial of God’s deliverance of their ancestors from the hand of the Egyptians, and also Jehovah’s supply during their 40 years of wilderness wanderings.

The whole world will be compelled to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that Israel is God’s chosen people. During the Millennium, Christ will rule with a “rod of iron” and the Church, His Bride, will rule and reign with Him. Israel will finally realize the Covenant promises of Jehovah, as they occupy and live in the land that God pledged to Abraham.

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4), He told her of “living water.” He told her, “whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). The woman did not understand His words. Jesus said, “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). Jesus continued by saying, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). The woman responded by saying that she knew Messiah would come, and when He does He will tell them all things. Jesus then made a remarkable statement, “I that speak unto thee am he!” (John 4:26) Immediately the woman left her waterpot and returned to her city. Her first reaction was to go and share what she had learned – Messiah had come! She beckoned others to “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:29).

My friend, Messiah came 2,000 years ago. He is foreshadowed throughout the Seven Feasts of the Lord. Christ is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). He is the Lamb of God that shed His blood on the Cross of Calvary for the sins of the world. He was buried in a borrowed tomb, but Jesus Christ rose again on the third day and has become the “Firstfruits” of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:20; 22). He ascended unto the Father 40 days after the Feast of Firstfruits, and fifty days after Firstfruits, the Comforter (Holy Spirit) indwelled His disciples on Pentecost.

As certain as Jesus Christ fulfilled these four feasts, the last three feasts (Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles) which foreshadow events yet future, will also come to pass. The important question that remains to be answered is simply, “Have YOU received the living water that Jesus offered unto the Samaritan woman?” “Have YOU asked Jesus Christ into your heart as Lord and

Savior?” Jesus Christ died for ALL MEN... Jew and Gentile alike. God desires that ALL MEN BE SAVED, but this is only possible through accepting His sacrifice on the Cross. Would YOU bow your head right now and pray from your heart,

“Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again from the dead. I repent of my sin and receive Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour. I cannot save myself, but I believe that I can be saved through the blood of Jesus. Thank You God for saving me in Jesus name. Help me to learn and live a life acceptable to You. In the name of Jesus I pray.... AMEN.”

IF you prayed this prayer, please let us know of your salvation so we may too rejoice that you have received forgiveness of sins. We want to send you a packet of literature that will help you grow in your new faith in God. You can contact the office of Jewish End-Time Ministries at **706-937-5369** or by email at **shalom@jem-missions.com**.