

WEEK 22

Leviticus 23:1-2 "The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies. (NIV)

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

You will notice in the key verse printed above that the Feasts are referred to as the “feasts of the LORD.” This word in Hebrew that is translated as “feasts” is *moed* which means “appointed times.” These are regular appointments God set up to meet with His people. The Lord proclaims that He makes known the end from the beginning, (Isa. 46:10) and through a study of these appointed times, we can understand more about God’s timetable. Many times these celebrations are referred to as “Jewish holidays” or the “Feasts of Israel” because the Jews today continue to remember these appointed times. And yet, they can best be understood by those who are redeemed by Messiah!

Why don’t we know more about them then? Simply put, it was during the reign of Constantine when the Church underwent grave revisions in doctrine and in practice. In an effort to make Christianity “legal,” or a distinct religion, the early church leaders removed all things Jewish from custom and practice in the worship of the God of Israel.

These appointed times are very significant for the past, present, and future of the church. This will be a brief overview study of them. There are many resources available in books, charts, and online. I have summarized this information with the help of this website: www.SusanCAnthony.com.

To be sure, God’s timing is not always our timing. Interestingly, the Jews even go by a completely different calendar than we do. The Gregorian calendar was drawn up by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 and is the one we typically go by now. Before that time, much of the western world used the Julian calendar, drawn up by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. The Gregorian calendar dates from what was thought to be the year of Jesus Christ’s birth. There are twelve months in a year of 365 ¼ days. It is a solar calendar, based on the cycle of the sun.

Jews use the Hebrew calendar which dates from what was thought to be the creation of the universe, 3760 years and three months before Christ. Thus the year 2012 is 5772 (2012 + 3760) on the Jewish calendar. It is a lunar calendar, based on the cycles of the moon. There are 12 months in the year, with a 13th month added every few years. Each month on the Hebrew calendar begins with the new moon, when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon. Days begin at sunset. (Genesis 1:5)

All of this is to help you understand that on the Jewish calendar, these feasts are celebrated on the same day of the month each year, but on the Gregorian calendar, those days will vary. The dates also begin at sunset.

The word “holiday” originally meant “holy day.” God established certain holy days soon after the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt in about 1446 B.C. These holy days are very significant to God. They outline the whole plan of salvation, including things that will happen in the future – our future. The fact that they foretell things that would not happen until thousands of years later is proof that God is the author. God chose the Jewish people to receive, preserve and transmit His written word and to bring forth His living Word, Jesus Christ.

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All of the feasts are both historical and prophetic. All of them teach about Jesus. They are sometimes called "holy convocations." The word translated "convocation" also means "rehearsal." Each year the Israelites "rehearsed" future events, and they still do.

Day One: Read Leviticus 23

1. List the seven feast days that God establishes with His people:

2. How does creation establish the pattern for the first appointed day? (Exodus 20:8-11)

3. List the Spring feasts:

4. We can learn about the first coming of Christ, by studying the spring feasts. Passover commemorates what event? (Ex 12: 21)

5. When was Jesus crucified? (John 12, Matt 26:2)

6. What is Jesus called in I Corinthians 5:7?

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for keeping the Passover that the destroyer would not touch your people. Increase my faith to trust you to provide deliverance for me and my family. Heb 11:28

Day Two: Read Deuteronomy 16:16; Exodus 12:17-20; I Corinthians 15:20; James 1:18; Proverbs 3:9

The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately follows Passover. The first three feasts have been combined into one 8-day feast.

1. On what three feast days were the men to appear before the Lord? (Deut. 16:16)

2. What does leaven represent in scripture?

3. How long was this ordinance to last?

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In Leviticus 23, God tells Israel to wave a first-fruits offering before the Lord. Someone would go to the standing ripe barley field, cut a sheaf of the choicest grain, and take it to the priest to wave before the Lord in the Temple. No one could eat of the harvest until this had been done. The first and best part of everything belongs to God. The first fruit was a promise of more to come. It acknowledged and thanked God as the source of all good things.

4. How does I Corinthians 15:20 refer to Jesus? _____
5. What are Christians called in James 1:18? _____

The first-fruits are the promise of life and blessings to come. Jesus died on Passover, was in the tomb on Unleavened Bread, and rose from the dead on First-fruits, promising new life to all who follow Him.

6. What does Proverbs 3:9 tell us to honor the Lord with? _____
For people who do not grow food for a living, the first-fruits would be the first portion of all they earn.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember that you measure my blessings according to the measure I use to bless You and others. Help me to give with a generous heart to both You and others. (Luke 6:38)

Day Three: Read Leviticus 23:15-17; Acts 2

The Hebrew word "Shavuot" means "weeks" and the Greek word "Pentecost" means "fifty." The next Feast is called Feast of Weeks, Harvest, Shavuot, or Pentecost. This is an "in-between" festival that ends the spring cycle of feasts. Some think that is the time we are living in right now.

1. When was the new grain offering to be given to the Lord? What form was it to be in?

On this day in the Old Testament, the Lord descended from heaven to Mt. Sinai in fire and wrote the Ten Commandments (the law) on tablets of stone. Moses met with God personally on the mountain and was given the law, the feasts, the sacrificial system, and the tabernacle plan of the Torah.

2. What happened on this day in the New Testament? (Acts 2) _____

3. How does Hebrews 10:1 describe the law? _____

The Holy Spirit writes the law of God on the tablet of our hearts of stone and transforms people from the inside out by gradually changing us to want what God wants and hate what God hates.

Is there anything in your life that God would hate? Let His word search your heart. Make changes as needed!

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Prayer: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps 139:23-24)

The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First-fruits teach us about Jesus' first coming, which is in the past. The Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles teach us about His second coming, which is in the future. The Feast of Weeks is the only time when God allows leavened bread to be presented to Him. Leaven represents sin. Christ was unleavened. After His second return, His people will be made unleavened, or free of sin. But during this in-between time, He has declared sinful people to be holy.

The bread was to be made of fine flour, ground and crushed. Believers are ground and crushed by trials, temptations and suffering in this life. Although leaven (sin) is still present in believers, the presence of the fire of the Spirit in each believer slows its spread.

Comparison between the Old Testament and New Testament events of Shavuot:

OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
Giving of the Law	Giving of the Holy Spirit
Law written on tablets of stone	Law written on hearts and minds
By the finger of God	By the Spirit of God
3000 people died (Ex 32:28)	3000 people saved (Acts 2:41)
Law of sin and death	Law of the Spirit of life
The letter kills	The Spirit gives life
Law came through Moses	Grace and truth came through Jesus

Day Four: Read Numbers 29:1; Exodus 19:16-19

Rosh Hashanah, meaning the "head of the year," is the Jewish New Year, the first day of the High Holy Days, also called the "Days of Awe." The Biblical name for this day is Yom Teruah, which means "the day of the awakening blast." Trumpets were sounded to call the people together on the Feast of Trumpets. Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), there were ten "Days of Awe" which was a time for the people to prepare their hearts by reflecting on their lives and their sins of the past year, and do whatever was necessary to make things right. It is a time to settle disputes, confess wrongs, and grant forgiveness.

1. What was to be done and not to be done on Rosh Hashanah according to Numbers 29?

Do: _____

Don't do: _____

2. Describe the Israelites' first experience with a trumpet blast on Mt. Sinai:

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In the times of the Tabernacle and Temple, the Day of Atonement was the only day on which a person was allowed to go behind the veil into the Holy of Holies.

3. Leviticus 16 describes in detail what happened on the Day of Atonement. According to verses 32-34, who was to make atonement? _____
How often? _____

The final Feast of the Lord is Sukkot, a word that means "booths." The root word is "dwell." The Feast of Tabernacles is an 8-day celebration of the final yearly harvest of fruit, oil and wine. The entire Torah (first 5 books of Bible) were read during this feast.

Leviticus 23:39 tells them how to celebrate the festival which is what inspired the Pilgrims to start what America celebrates as Thanksgiving.

4. How long were the Israelites to live in their booths, or temporary dwellings? (Lev 23:42-43)

Why? _____

5. I Chronicles 29:15 reminds us that our days on earth are like what?

Prayer: Father, help me to be awake and ready for Your return so that I won't be surprised or ashamed. (Rev 16:15)

Day Five: Read Daniel 12

Prophetic significance of the Fall Feasts:

There are various interpretations regarding which feast aligns itself with the events of Jesus' coming back to earth. Because scholars have debated these events for centuries, we won't be able to resolve them here. However, we are told to learn, study, be diligent, and be alert to the events that are going on around us. We are told that at the time of the end, the wise will understand (Daniel 12:10). Various times in scripture God says, "then you will know that I am the Lord." We want to know those conditions the Lord uses to reveal more about His character to us.

The Day of Atonement is prophecy of a future event. A common interpretation is that the Day of Atonement points to the Tribulation and the second coming of Messiah in judgment.

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1. What does Matthew 24:31 say will be used to call God's people to gather together?

The shofar (made from a ram's horn) is referred to throughout scripture as a trumpet and had various symbolic meanings for its sounding. It reminds us of creation's beginning, the first of the Ten Days of Repentance, defeat of the enemy, judgment, and a future ingathering.

2. What does Ephesians 5:14-17 tell us to do?

This passage was more than likely drawn from an ancient Temple prayer for Rosh haShanah.

3. What does I Corinthians 15:52 and I Thessalonians 4:16-17 speak of that will occur at the sounding of the trumpet?

Are you ready for the next sound of the trumpet? If not, what do you need to do to get ready?

The Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the day when the Lord will come to physically live ("tabernacle") with men on earth during the 1000-year rule of Christ. Until then, the Holy Spirit spiritually lives within those who belong to Jesus.

4. Zechariah 14:9-19 speaks of the Day of the Lord. Who will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in that day? _____
5. What will happen to those who don't? _____

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember that as a believer, I am your temple. I want to honor you with my temple today so that you can dwell there comfortably and we can rejoice together. (I Corinthians 3:16-17)

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

Search "Feasts of the Lord" on the internet. There are many good sites. Just use discernment. Everyone has their own opinion as to what happens when. This isn't designed for "date setting," but rather further understanding and interest in what the Lord is doing, so that we can discern the signs and the times.

Some reliable ones are: www.khouse.org; www.prophecytoday.com; www.hativka.org; www.hebrew4christians.com; www.elshaddaiministries.us. Not all of these sites will agree with each other! Keep studying and watching!

There are many good books on the subject as well.