

The Feasts Overview: Feasting to the Lord

There are many people who turn to electronic or printed calendars to plan or check their agenda. But not many turn to their calendars to find the answers to meaningful questions of life. Unless it's God's calendar.

Leviticus 23 has been called God's calendar, because it describes festivals God planned for the nation of Israel. Through an annual cycle, God mandated that the people of Israel perform particular rituals on specific dates as a way of acting out & learning truths that you and I need to take to heart.

The Feasts listed in **Leviticus 23** helped to remind & teach them of God as they celebrated His saving acts for His people. For Israelites who lived at a distance from the tabernacle, more than a month of every year was occupied in attending the annual feasts.

There are two words translated "feast" in this chapter.

Vs 2, 4, 37: Mo'ed means an appointed meeting, it stresses a time factor.

Vs 6,34, 39,41 Chag means a festival.

It comes from word that means, "to take a journey or pilgrimage". It is used in reference to the 3 Feasts all males were required to attend.

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

We're told in the book **Patriarchs & Prophets (PP) 537.2** that Israel was surrounded by fierce, warlike tribes, that were eager to seize upon their lands. Yet three times every year all the able-bodied men, and all the people who could make the journey, were directed to leave their homes and travel to the place of assembly, near the center of the land. What was to hinder their enemies from sweeping down upon those unprotected households, to lay them waste with fire and sword; to take them into captivity? **God had promised to be their protector.**

"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them." **Psalm 34:7**

The feasts recounted God's mighty acts on behalf of Israel. As such they were times of rejoicing, along with the New Moons.

Psalm 126:1-3 "When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. ² Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." ³ The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad."

Numbers 10:10 "Also in the day of your gladness, in your appointed feasts, and at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be a memorial for you before your God: I am the Lord your God."

The feasts were also times of teaching. **Psalm 81:3,13** "Blow the trumpet at the time of the New

Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.¹³ [“Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!”](#)

But God grew weary with Israel when they failed to learn the lessons they should have from the feasts:

Isaiah 1: 13 [“Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.”](#)

Each of the feasts represented a type of Christ and His ministry. In other words, they pointed to Jesus Christ and some aspect of His ministry. Because they meet their fulfillment in Christ (please see the study on [“Colossians 2:13-17, The Law That Was Nailed”](#) in this series) they are no longer to be observed. As such, spiritual Israel no longer needs to celebrate those feasts. I’m thankful we no longer need to offer up animal sacrifices. When the true Lamb of God sacrificed His life at Calvary the ritual/ceremonial law was nailed to the cross ([Colossians 2:13-17](#)). But there are still important lessons connected to those feasts that we should not forget. Those lessons help us to learn about God, His character, and His work for our redemption.

In **Leviticus 23:1-3**, God begins the description of the feasts by presenting the weekly seventh day Sabbath. The eternal seventh day Sabbath was given before sin ([Gen 2:2-3](#)), was kept by Jesus on earth ([Luke 4:16](#)), and will remain after sin is no more. **Isaiah 66:23** says [“And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me,”](#) says the Lord.“

The new moon was the beginning of the month and was also a time of feasting and special worship ([1 Sam 20:5](#)). All of the feasts described in **Leviticus 23** would be considered special Sabbaths. But they were never to be confused with the eternal seventh day Sabbath as that Sabbath had its origins at creation ([Gen 2:1-3](#)) and was for all mankind ([Mark 2:27](#)) while the feast Sabbaths originated within the nation of Israel to teach them gospel lessons about Christ and His mission.

With the annual feasts Israel was invited to remember and celebrate Christ’s redemptive work on an annual basis. While every week, on the 7th day, mankind is invited to celebrate the creative and redemptive acts of God on His eternal seventh day Sabbath.

So whether its concerning the weekly Sabbath, or the annual Sabbaths, entering God's rest is and was a matter of accepting God by/in faith as our Creator and Re-creator, by choosing to depend completely, totally, on Jesus’ shed blood so we can have a righteous position before God. We must "rest from our own work because self-righteousness always fails, we can't do it. **Instead, we focus, celebrate, and feast on the goodness and mercy of God.**

The feasts were organized around Israel’s 2 harvests – the Spring harvest of barley, then wheat, and grains; and later, the Fall fruit harvest.

Generally, each feast worked in 3 important ways:

- 1. It commemorated a past mighty act of God**
- 2. It portrayed a future aspect of Christ’s ministry**
- 3. It motivated/inspired/taught Israel to live holy lives before a Holy God.**

The lessons these feasts taught, rather than the feasts themselves, are still important for spiritual Israel today!

Paul said to the **Galatians in Ch 4:9-10** [“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰You observe days and months and seasons and years.](#)

While the 7th day Sabbath highlights God as **Creator/Redeemer**, each feast also helped highlight and teach an attribute of God:

Below is a brief overview and introduction to what will be studied in more detail in each feast study lesson.

Spring Feasts

- **Passover:** Israel acknowledged and praised God as their **Deliverer**

Paul said to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 5:7** [“Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”](#)

The Passover foretold the role of Jesus' blood in covering the believer with His blood, saving the believer from the death they, and we, deserve.

It was at the Passover when Jesus' was “lost” in the temple by His parents when Jesus was 12 - his parents accidentally left him behind (**Luke Ch 2**). In the book **Desire of Ages (DA) 78.1** we read: [“For the first time the child Jesus looked upon the temple. He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers He bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service. Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own life. New impulses were awakening within Him. Silent and absorbed, He seemed to be studying out a great problem. The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour.](#)

When and His parent's found Him, 3 days later, in the temple, teaching the teachers, He said, in **Luke 2:49**, [“Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?”](#) Jesus learned the lessons the feasts taught concerning Himself. In **Luke 2:52** we read [“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”](#)

Jesus, the true Passover lamb, died at the time of the Passover.

John 19:14 tells us that it was about noon on the Passover Day when Jesus was sentenced by Pilate. **Matthew 27:46**,

Mark 15:34, and **Luke 22:44-46** tell us it was the 9th hour – 3 p.m. when Jesus gave up His life.

- **Unleavened Bread:** they again acknowledged and praised God as their **Deliverer** and **Provider**. **Hbrw:** Unleavened Bread **“Matzo”** means [“sweet, without sourness”](#). If an Israelite ate any leavened bread during this feast they would be cut off. To avoid that risk they were to get it all out of their house. The original instructions given to Israel for the celebration of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread included a prohibition of eating anything leavened from the 14th day to

the 21st day of Abib - **Exodus 12:17-20** "So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.¹⁸ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.¹⁹ For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land.²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."

Bread is used prominently in Scripture; both in miracles and as a symbol for Jesus: There is the manna that sustained Israel in the wilderness, the shewbread - 12 pierced cakes - that was kept on the table in the temple and eaten by the priests, the unleavened bread, and the feeding of the multitudes by Jesus to name a few. Jesus taught that He was the true Bread. He is the sweetest thing a sinner can find and experience! Notice Jesus' words in **John 6:32-35**, "Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven."³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

On the feast day of unleavened bread, after His work on Calvary was finished, Jesus rested in the tomb. In another parallel, as there was no leavening in the bread that would make it rise, Jesus had no sin and did not rise on the Sabbath from the tomb. He did no work on the Sabbath. Jesus, the Bread of Life, was perfect and His sacrifice was perfect.

If Jesus is to be our bread of life than we must feast on Him, His Word, His life, teachings and example. We must fully take Him in to our lives. Through His grace we are more than conquerors as Paul wrote in **Romans 8:37**, "yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us."

- **Firstfruits/Wavesheaf**

The 15th day of Nisan (Abib) started the feast of Unleavened Bread. On the 16th day a shock of Barley was waved, indicating it was time to begin the Barley harvest, which was the first grain (first fruits) harvested in the spring and presented to the priest for inspection/approval.

After His crucifixion, on resurrection morning, Jesus said to Mary in **John 20:17**, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" He returned to heaven to present Himself as the Firstfruit of the redeemed, and for His Father's inspection/approval of His sacrifice.

- **Feast of Weeks (Pentecost):** Israel thanked God as their **Provider**

49 days after the wave sheaf offering (50 inclusive of that day), came **Pentecost**, also called the **Feast of Harvest** or the **Feast of Weeks**. Here is **an interesting point to me:** Israel had one week of no leaven, followed by 6 weeks of leaven; A parallel to the Sabbath day of rest and the upcoming

week for work.

This one-day feast was an expression of gratitude to God for the grain He provided to be prepared as their food, two loaves baked with leaven were presented before God.

I believe the Feast of Weeks commemorated more than God's providence and protection: It may also have commemorated Sanctification: Exodus 19:1 "In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai". This puts it about 45 days since the Exodus, or Passover. **God doesn't want to just justify us, He wants to sanctify us.** He says in **Ex 19:5-6** "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

After another 3 days of preparation & washing, God would offer Israel the New Covenant, but they countered with their own covenant – self-obedience (self-righteousness). You remember the rest of that story, the golden calf, the broken tablets that had been cut from God's own sapphire blue throne (**Ex 24:12; Ezek 1:26; 10:1; Ex 34:1,4**). Obedience and righteousness through personal efforts, independent of God's grace, is always impossible for a fallen race. This was a lesson Israel needed to learn, and while God presented them with His new covenant, He allowed them to enter into this old (first) covenant to help them learn the futility of self works/righteousness.

Hebrews 8:8 says the fault was with the people – not with God's law. Oh how we need the new covenant - God writing His law on our hearts, and giving us a new heart and new spirit (**Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-27; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16-17**). God's grace enabling His children to obey and overcome sin!

It's interesting that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was 7 days without leaven, but the Feast of Weeks bread offering was bread with leaven (**Lev 23:17**). At Mt. Sinai, God's people still had the leaven of sin in them. Twice in **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul calls Jesus our firstfruits: "²⁰ But now **Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits** (Grk: aparche - ap-ar-khay – Preeminent/Superior) of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits** (aparche - or the most important portion), afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power."

On the feast of weeks the **2 wave loafs** were **made from leavened wheat flour. Why leavening?** When Christ rose on resurrection Sunday and went to heaven to present Himself as the wave offering, the first fruit offering, He took something else - someone else – with Him: Notice what is written in these next two passages: **Matthew 27:51-53**, "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵² and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

Ephesians 4:8 "Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave

[gifts to men.”](#)

Those resurrected saints were also a type of firstfruits, not perfect like Jesus but redeemed, thus containing “leaven” (a symbol of sin/hypocrisy, [Luke 12:1](#)), but still overcomers through faith.

Christians are now called to be God’s first fruit.

Revelation 14:4-6 says the 144,000, symbolic of those living in the last days after 1844, are to be God’s firstfruits: [“These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.”](#)⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are [without fault before the throne of God.”](#)

But we can’t be effective firstfruits while we are filled with leaven! **Hebrews 10:15-17** says: [“But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,](#)¹⁶ [“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”](#)¹⁷ then He adds, [“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”](#)

50 Days after Jesus resurrection came Pentecost, see [Acts 2:1](#). In [Acts 2:16,17](#) Peter claimed the promise of [Joel 2:28](#) was being fulfilled. Yet, God is still waiting to pour out His spirit on His people so they can finish taking the gospel to the earth and the final harvest can be finished ([Rev. 18:1](#)).

Fall Feasts

- **Trumpets:** they acknowledged God as their **Judge**
- **Atonement:** they celebrated God as their **Advocate or Vindicator**
- **Tabernacles:** they celebrated God as their ever-present **Travel Companion & Protector**

The feasts were a time of rejoicing. In addition to teaching Israel about God, you could say the feasts taught Israel about Israel. They served to call Israel to holiness if they would rest and rejoice in God. In addition to reminding them of God’s saving acts in the past, it pointed them to the future, as well as the present.

Conclusion: Though the feasts ended at Calvary, their lessons did not. God’s people would do well to remember the lessons learned through the feasts, and celebrate the unchanging attributes of God.

Please, prayerfully consider what the consequences in this life and for eternity would be if we forgot, but also consider the blessings of remembering!

When we Celebrate God as our Creator, Deliverer, Provider, Judge, Advocate, and Ever-Present Protector, how does that affect our relationship with Him as well as with others?

One author said the Spring & Fall feasts are like a compass, whose needle is always pointing to Christ. Its good to have reminders, helping to point us to Christ.

Isaiah 30:29 [“You shall have a song As in the night when a holy festival is kept, And gladness of heart as when one goes with a flute, To come into the mountain of the Lord, To the Mighty One of Israel.”](#)