

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Holy Days - 7th Month

Leviticus 23:23-44

Intro: The main theme of our current section of study (21-24) is emphasizing to Israel the necessity of showing due reverence to the holy things of the Lord and the holy times of the Lord. Ch23 provides a list of all the holy times or holy events prescribed by the Lord on Israel's ceremonial calendar. On this List are 7 annual feasts that Israel was commanded to observe and celebrate as well as how and when Israel was to observe them. As we are going through this list, we should remember that these are not feasts that Moses or the Israelite leadership enacted for the benefit of the nation; these were feasts declared by the Lord Himself to remind or instruct the nation on the works He had performed on their behalf. Unbeknownst to Israel, these feasts also contain an eschatological aspect that points to greater work that the Lord will perform in the future for the eternal benefit of all His people.

In our last study, we looked at the first 4 feasts but at the very top of the list, there's an event mentioned that isn't a feast at all. The weekly Sabbath is the first thing mentioned on the list and it appears first because it is the original Lord's Day; the premiere Lord's Day, the day by which all these others feasts are to be modeled after. Israel is to regard, respect and keep these feasts of the Lord with the same obedient and submissive hearts with which they regarded and respected the Sabbath and kept it holy.

The first holy day on Israel's ceremonial calendar was the observance of the Passover. This was a 1-day observance that recalled Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. It was to be celebrated on the 14th day of the 1st month of the year (our March – April). The next feast (Unleavened Bread) began the day after Passover (15th) and lasted for 7 days. It recalled Israel's escape out of Egypt and the Lord's protection and provision that accompanied and facilitated their deliverance. The next feast (Offering of the Firstfruits) most likely also occurred in the 1st month, some scholars estimating that these first 3 feasts happened within a 9-day period. Being in the spring, this feast coincided with the harvest of the winter barley and the Israelites were to bring the best of the harvest to the Lord as an act of gratitude and thanksgiving. The 4th feast was similar to the 3rd in that it

coincided with the wheat harvest. It was known by different names in Israel (Feast of Weeks/ Harvest) but eventually came to be known as Pentecost, the Greek word for 50th, since it occurred 50 days after Passover. This day was celebrated with animal sacrifices as well as food offerings that expressed thanksgiving for the Lord's provision and a request for that provision to continue.

These 4 feasts occurred in the 1st half of Israel's ceremonial calendar. The 1st 2 celebrated the Lord's deliverance of Israel from the old land while the next 2 anticipated the Lord's provision of a new land for Israel, a Promise Land and the celebration of them was an assurance that Israel would one day arrive in the land. The last 3 holy occasions took place in the 2nd half of the year. Each of them were observed in the 7th month, making them particularly significant and probably serving as 1 more reminder of the Sabbath principle and the covenant the Sabbath signified.

23-25 – On the 1st day of the 7th month, trumpets were to be blown. This holy occasion was to be a reminder, or a *memorial*, that was proclaimed by trumpet blasts. What's interesting here, however, is who's doing the remembering? In keeping with other occurrences of the term in this book, it's most likely that the trumpet blasts are a way of calling on the Lord to remember His people with favor. It is a plea for the Lord to be gracious and merciful. We see a similar meaning in other OT texts in which the Lord "remembers" someone: He either shines His favor on them, as in [Gen 30:22](#) and [Num 10:9](#); or He affirms His covenant faithfulness to them as in [Gen 9:15-16](#) and [Lev 26:42 & 45](#). In contexts in which trumpets are blown, it is to acknowledge and request the Lord's help as in [Num 10:9-10](#) and the unforgettable scene of the Battle of Jericho. The blowing of the trumpets was thus a musical prayer that both acknowledged and requested the Lord's favor. And since the Lord is the One commanding them to do this, they have His personal assurance that He will hear (and respond to) their prayer!

Our text doesn't provide any specifics as to why it was necessary for this event to occur on the 1st day of the 7th month. But, we should probably see a connection between this holy day and the Day of Atonement that was to come just 9 days later. This musical prayer was both a petition to the Lord to be gracious and merciful to His people as the Day of Atonement was approaching and a reminder to the Israelites that they needed to be truly humble before their covenant God and appropriately penitent in light of the

great solemnity attached to that day.

There is still much debate as to whether the ancient Israelites considered this day as New Year's Day but it has been celebrated as such by the Jews since about the 4th century. The practice continues today as Rosh Hashanah, which was just celebrated on Oct 2, and a ram's horn (shofar) is blown to announce its arrival.

26-32 – We studied the Day of Atonement in detail in ch 16. This was the day that the High Priest prepared himself to enter into the Most Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, the very throne room of the Covenant King, to offer the blood of the sacrifice on the mercy seat for the sins of the nation. There were actually 3 offerings made on this day, the purification offering (for Israel's sins), the aza'zel goat offering (for the removal of their sins) and the burnt offering (to express thanksgiving and gratitude for the Lord's gracious provision of atonement). No details are provided here for the specifics of the Day because they have already been stated. This day is now known as Yom Kippur and is still an important day in Israel, even among most secular Jews. It was celebrated just last Friday (Oct 11th).

While our text provides no specific details about the events of this Holy day, which occurred on the Before this, it does, however, emphasize the importance of the proper observance of this day; twice repeating the punishment for those who refuse to observe it, mentioning 3 times that the people must afflict or humble themselves on this day and 3 reminders that the people are to do no work on this day.

This emphasis should come as no surprise: this is the day on which the people's sins and impurities were cleansed and removed so that they could continue in covenant fellowship with their holy Lord. This was not a celebration feast, it was a day for all the Israelites to afflict their souls (by fasting and reflecting) in humble recognition of sin and their need for atonement. Those who refused to observe this day were either denying the Lord's holy hatred of sin or their desperate need of His gracious cleansing and forgiveness (or both). Either way, they were fundamentally rejecting their covenant Lord and their need of Him. But, those who did observe this day could rest assured that the Lord had cleansed them fully. The holy God who is offended by sin is also the compassionate and gracious God who delights to cleanse and forgive it (**Micah 7:19, I John 1:9, II Peter 3:9** – not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance).

33-43 – Before these instructions were given to Moses, this feast was known as the Feast of Harvest (**Ex 23:16**) since it came near the end of the harvest. But, in our text it is called the Feast of Tabernacles (or booths). Today, this holy day is called Sukkoth, the Hebrew word for booths. This was a very significant feast: it lasted for 7 days with an additional 8th-day closing holy assembly. It required extensive food offerings and all males were required to celebrate this feast at the tabernacle. The word for tabernacles in the name of the feast is not the same Hebrew word used for the Lord's tabernacle. It is actually sukkot, which refers to a booth or a temporary shelter.

Our text delivers 3 sets of specific instructions: when to celebrate this feast (15th day of 7th month); when not to work (limited work on 1st and 8th days) and what to offer (food offering each day). **V37-38** provide an initial summary of the feasts of the Lord. They also make very clear that these feasts are meant to supplement the other sacred occasions (weekly Sabbath) not replace them. And just as equally so, the offerings and sacrifices made during these feasts were not to replace or supersede any of the regular gifts, vows or freewill offerings that were to be given to the Lord on a regular basis throughout the year. NT believers tend to make a big deal about how the Israelites were only required to give 10% to the Lord. But, as we can see just from this chapter, they regularly gave much more than that.

The last few verses (**39-43**) return to describing the Feast of Booths and provide additional commands that explain its purpose. The commands are for natural-born Israelites to gather tree branches and to build and live in these booths for 7 days. Not all Israelites had tents when the Lord delivered them out of Egypt because most of them lived in houses. When they fled from Pharaoh, they left with very little material possessions so many of them were likely still living in these temporary shelters at the foot of Mt. Sinai. This feast served as a way to remind Israel of their deliverance from Egypt and gave them the opportunity to teach their descendants about the Exodus and their 40 year wandering in the wilderness. The blessing of redemption and the bountiful provision they enjoyed were gracious gifts given from their loving King and these wonderful gifts called for an appropriate response of wholehearted dependence, willing obedience and reverent worship.

It's worth noting here that later, the Jews added 2 extra rituals to their

celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles to remind them of God's wilderness blessings. The first was the pouring out of water from the pool of Siloam, to recall the Lord's provision of water in the desert. On the 8th day, a priest went down to the pool and drew water in a golden pitcher, which he brought back to the altar, pouring it into a silver basin. The 2nd was the placing of 4 large lighted candlesticks to recall the pillar of fire that led the people by night. Jesus capitalized on both of these significant rituals by directly relating them to Himself ([John 7:37-38](#); [8:12](#)). It's tragic that the Jews were so careful to maintain their traditions and yet, completely missed their Messiah, the One these traditions celebrated and pointed to, who was standing right there in their midst!

When the Israelites forgot that the Lord was their powerful and gracious King, they began to doubt His care for them and became quick to grumble and disobey. So, the Lord provides them with constant reminders of His holy character and mighty works in these holy times. Whether it was the weekly reminder that He was their covenant King or the annual reminders of His redemption and provision, the Lord instituted these times to help Israel remember His power and grace, enabling them to consistently respond to Him in an appropriate way. What's more, He didn't want the Israelites to come before Him just as individuals; He made these times holy gatherings. The Lord always calls individuals into a body of covenant keepers, knowing that all believers need brothers and sisters to strengthen and encourage them to live as His holy people.

We've discussed the specifics of each feast and the theological significance of each to the ancient Israelites but what is the prophetic significance of the feasts? Well, as we have seen, on Israel's calendar, the 4 Spring feasts were grouped together and the 3 Fall feasts were also grouped. There was a separation of time between these 2 groups. As a group, the first 4 feasts point to the work of Christ in His first coming; his earthly ministry as recorded in the NT.

The feast of Passover clearly points to Jesus as our Passover Lamb ([1 Cor 5:7](#)). He was the Lamb of God who was sacrificed and whose blood was received and applied so the wrath of God would pass over us. In the Exodus account of the first Passover we should remember that the firstborn Jews in Egypt weren't saved from death by admiring the lamb, or by caring for the lamb or even by loving the lamb. No, the lamb had to be slain and the blood

had to be applied to the doorposts. Today, sinners aren't saved by observing the example of Christ's sinless life. They're also not saved by reading and hearing the spiritual wisdom shared in all of Christ's teachings. They're not saved by Christ the Example or Christ the Teacher; they're only saved by Christ the Substitute, who gave His life in our place on the cross at the same hour the Passover lambs were being slain at the Temple in Israel.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread points to the time of Jesus' burial, after His perfect, sinless sacrifice on the cross. During this feast, Jesus was received by the Father as holy and complete, perfectly accomplishing our salvation. The Jews observed this 7-day feast by only eating unleavened bread with their meals, and they carefully cleansed all the yeast out of their homes. But again, the Jews in Egypt weren't spared the Lord's judgment; they weren't saved from death and delivered from bondage by getting rid of their leaven but by applying the blood of the Passover lamb by faith. People today think they can be saved because they reform or get rid of a bad habit, but as good as these things are, they can never do what only the blood of Jesus Christ can do. Salvation is through the blood of Jesus Christ alone, the sinless Lamb of God.

The Feast of Firstfruits points to the resurrection of Jesus, who was the first human to receive resurrection, never to die again. Many scholars maintain that this feast occurred on the day after the regular weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If this is the case, then this corresponds to the very day (Sunday) that Jesus rose from the grave. It's because of this that Paul declares Jesus to be the firstborn from the dead in [Col 1:18](#) and that He has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep...But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming ([1 Cor 15:20, 23](#)). As the Apostle Paul sees it, by Holy Spirit inspiration, Christ's resurrection on the day of the offering of firstfruits is a guarantee that those who belong to Christ will also be raised from the dead at a later date.

The Feast of Pentecost points to the birth of the Church and the harvest of souls that would come from it. The pouring out of the Spirit on that day was a guarantee of the church's continued full possession of the Spirit in all times and places. Significantly, in the ritual of this feast, 2 loaves of leavened bread were waved as a holy offering to the Lord, speaking of the bringing of "leavened" Gentiles into the church and the 3000 that were

saved on that day in Acts 2 were the firstfruits of a much greater harvest of Gentile converts to come. The Christian church of the last 2000+ years, as well as the converts yet to be added, constitute the fulfillment of that guarantee.

Between the 1st set of 4 feasts and the 2nd set of 3 feasts there is a significant time gap – nearly 4 months. This was a time of harvest in Israel, even as our current modern age is a time of harvest for the church...until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in ([Rom 11:25](#)). The 2nd group of the last 3 feasts points to events associated with the Second Coming of Jesus.

The Feast of Trumpets points to the ultimate holy convocation of God's people at the sound of a trumpet – the rapture of the church ([I Thess 4:16-17](#)). A trumpet is sounded when God sends His angels to gather His elect ([Mt 24:31](#)), when the saints are bodily resurrected ([I Cor 15:52](#)) and when the saints are raised from the dead and the church is caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. God remembers His people, raises them from the dead and calls them to be with Himself, rescuing them from the judgment to come. The sounding of trumpets also points to God's gathering of Israel for His special purpose in the last days.

The Day of Atonement not only points to the ultimate, perfect atonement Jesus offered on our behalf, but also to the affliction – and salvation – Israel will experience during the Great Tribulation. It will truly be a time when the soul of Israel is afflicted, but it is for their ultimate salvation. Jeremiah prophesied concerning this time ([30:7](#)) saying, "Alas! For that day is great; So that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it."

the Feast of Tabernacles points to the millennial rest and comfort of God for Israel and all of His people. From its beginning to end, it's all about peace and rest and the Lord's desire for His people to rejoice and be glad in it. In fact, Zechariah prophesies that this Feast will be celebrated in the millennium by all nations under the universal rule of the Messiah ([14:16](#)).

Our modern world is no more observant than the Jews of Jesus' day. Half the world celebrates Christmas and most of the same celebrate Easter. Regardless of the pagan origins of these 2 holidays, they represent 2 of the most important days in all of human history: the day Jesus was born and the

day He was raised from the dead. You may have celebrated these holidays all your life and never realized their spiritual significance. Well, now you know so do be blind like the religious Jews of Jesus' day who refused to see their promised Messiah. Jesus came to earth to sacrifice His blood so that you might be saved! Don't refuse to see and accept Him as your Savior. 😊