Jesus in the Feasts Leviticus 23

1. Introduction

Leviticus 23:4 *'These are the Lord's appointed times, holy assemblies, which you must proclaim at their appointed time.*

Colossians 2:16-17 *Therefore do not let anyone judge you with respect to food or drink, or in the matter of a feast, new moon, or Sabbath days— [17] these are only the shadow of the things to come, but the reality is Christ!*

a. These feasts are described as the Lord's appointed times but often are only considered to be Jewish feasts. However, since these are "the Lord's" feasts they clearly have a purpose for all believers. As we look at these feasts we can see the deep truths that they reveal from the heart of the Father. God established these feasts and specific times when His people would meet with Him and remind themselves of God's eternal plan.

b. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish prophet Amos records that God declared He would do nothing without first revealing it to His servants, the prophets

Amos 3:7 *Certainly the Sovereign Lord does nothing without first revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.*

c. From the Old Covenant to the New, Genesis to Revelation, God provides picture after picture of His entire plan for mankind and one of the most startling prophetic pictures is outlined for us in the feasts of Leviticus 23.

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

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

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

g. Many Bible scholars and commentators along with many present day believers believe that these autumn feasts have not yet been fulfilled by Jesus. However, the "blessed hope" for all believers in Jesus Christ is that they most assuredly will be fulfilled.

Titus 2:11-13 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. [12] It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

h. As the four spring feasts were fulfilled literally and right on the actual feast day in connection with Christ's first coming, these three autumn feasts, it is believed by many, will likewise be fulfilled literally in connection to the Lord's second coming.

2. Spring feasts – Jesus first coming

Leviticus 23:5 *In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, is a Passover offering to the Lord*

a. Passover points to the Messiah as our Passover lamb whose blood would be shed for our sins. We looked in more detail at this in a previous session.

1 Corinthians 5:7 *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

b. Jesus was crucified during the time that the Passover was observed (Mark 14:12). Christ is a "lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:19) because His life was completely free from sin (Hebrews 4:15). As the first Passover marked the Hebrews' release from Egyptian slavery, so the death of Christ marks our release from the slavery of sin (Romans 8:2).

c. Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:6 *Then on the fifteenth day of the same month will be the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.*

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

d. First Fruits

Leviticus 23:10 *"Speak to the Israelites and tell them, 'When you enter the land that I am about to give to you and you gather in its harvest, then you must bring the sheaf of the first portion of your harvest to the priest,*

First fruits refers to the Messiah's resurrection as the first fruits of the righteous. Jesus was resurrected on this very day, which is one of the reasons that Paul refers to him as the "first fruits from the dead."

1 Corinthians 15:20 *But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

e. Weeks or Pentecost

Leviticus 23:15-16 *You must count for yourselves seven weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day you bring the wave offering sheaf; they must be complete weeks.* ***16*** *You must count fifty days—until the day after the seventh Sabbath—and then you must present a new grain offering to the Lord.*

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

3. Autumn Feasts – Jesus second coming

a. Trumpets

Leviticus 23:24 *The Lord spoke to Moses: **24** "Tell the Israelites, 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you must have a complete rest, a memorial announced by loud horn blasts (shofar/trumpet), a holy assembly.*

i The first of the fall feasts, The Feast of Trumpets, occurs in September. This jump in time from the Feast of Pentecost in May or June seems to represent the Church Age in God's planning, with the trumpet unquestionably represents the rapture (catching up) of believers.

ii The trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the Temple. The high priest actually blew the trumpet so that the faithful would stop harvesting to worship. Now, when the trumpet sounds living believers will cease their harvest and rise from the earth along with those who have gone before. This is that glorious day when the Messiah Jesus will appear in the heavens as He comes for His bride, the Church. This event is always associated in Scripture with the blowing of a loud trumpet or shofar (ram's horn)

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 *Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. **14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. **15** For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. **18** Therefore encourage one another with these words.*

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 *Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— **52** in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*

b. Day of Atonement

Leviticus 23:27 *The Lord spoke to Moses: **27** "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It is to be a holy assembly for you, and you must humble yourselves and present a gift to the Lord.*

i This day is the most sombre of all days for the Jews – the day when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to make sacrifice and atonement for all the sins of the nation. This prophetically points to the day when Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom on the earth. That will be the Day of Atonement for the Jewish remnant when they "look upon Him whom they have pierced," repent of their sins, and receive Him as their Messiah

Zechariah 12:10 *I will pour out on the kingship of David and the population of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication so that they will look to me, the one they have pierced. They will lament for him as one laments for an only son, and there will be a bitter cry for him like the bitter cry for a firstborn.*

Romans 11:1-5, 25-33 *So I ask, God has not rejected his people, has he? Absolutely not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.* ***2*** *God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew! Do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?* ***3*** *"Lord,* ***they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars; I alone am left and they are seeking my life!"*** ***4*** *But what was the divine response to him? "****I have kept*** *for myself* ***7,000 people who have not bent the knee to Baal****."*

5 *So in the same way at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.*

25 *For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.* ***26*** *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:*

*"****The Deliverer will come out of Zion; he will remove ungodliness from Jacob****.****27*** ***And this is my covenant with them****,****when I take away their sins.****"*

28 *In regard to the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but in regard to election they are dearly loved for the sake of the fathers.* ***29*** *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* ***30*** *Just as you were formerly disobedient to God, but have now received mercy due to their disobedience,* ***31*** *so they too have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy.* ***32*** *For God has consigned all people to disobedience so that he may show mercy to them all.*

33 *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how unfathomable his ways!*

ii We will look at the Day of Atonement and the role of the High Priest in more detail next time.

c. Tabernacles or Booths

Leviticus 23:34 *The Lord spoke to Moses:* ***34*** *"Tell the Israelites, 'On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Feast of Shelters for seven days to the Lord.*

i God wanted to celebrate the fact that He provided shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness. Each year on Tabernacles, devout Jews build little shelters or "booths" (sukkot) outside their houses and worship in them.

ii Tabernacles represents the Lord's shelter in the world to come, His great Tabernacle to exist in Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom. The Lord will establish His Tabernacle in Jerusalem and the world will come every year to appear before the King and worship Him

Ezekiel 37:26 *I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be a perpetual covenant with them. I will establish them, increase their numbers, and place my sanctuary among them forever*

Micah 4:1-3 *And in future days the Lord's Temple Mount will be the most important mountain of all; it will be more prominent than other hills. People will stream to it.* ***2*** *Many nations will come, saying, "Come on! Let's go up to the Lord's mountain, to the temple of Jacob's God, so he can teach us his ways and we can live by his laws." For instruction will proceed from Zion, the Lord's message from Jerusalem.* ***3*** *He will arbitrate between many peoples and settle disputes between many distant nations. They will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.Nations will not use weapons against other nations,and they will no longer train for war.*

4. Celebrating the Feasts

a. The question often asked is should Christians celebrate these feast days today? Whether or not a Christian celebrates these feast days would be a matter of conscience for the individual Christian.

Colossians 2:16-17 *Therefore do not let anyone judge you with respect to food or drink, or in the matter of a feast, new moon, or Sabbath days— [17] these are only the shadow of the things to come, but the reality is Christ!*

b. Christians are not bound to observe the feasts the way an Old Testament Jew was, but we should not criticize another believer who does or does not observe these special days and feasts

Romans 14:5 *One person regards one day holier than other days, and another regards them all alike. Each must be fully convinced in his own mind.*

c. While it is not required for Christians to celebrate the Jewish feast days, it is beneficial to study them if it leads one to a greater understanding and appreciation for Christ's death and resurrection and the future promise of His coming..

d. As a community of born again believers in Jesus we believe it is important to recognise that we have been grafted into the commonwealth of Israel. As such we stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters by supporting and praying for Israel.

e. As part of this understanding we have chosen to celebrate the appointed feasts of the Lord as revealed in Leviticus 23. We believe they are His feasts so we observe them as a means of identifying with the Jewish people, and with God's continuing purpose for his ancient people.

f. However, above all else we celebrate them so we can gaze on the marvellous mysteries of God's unfolding plan in revealing His Son, our Saviour, our Bridegroom. To gaze upon Jesus and grow in revelation and intimate communion with Him. We choose to celebrate these special days by putting Christ in the centre of the celebration, as the One who came to fulfil the prophetic significance of each of them.



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

A Summary Chart of the Feasts of the Lord

FEAST	DATE	Memorial	Fulfilment	Significance
Passover	Nisan 14 (Spring)	Israel's deliverance out of Egyptian bondage	Crucifixion	Speaks of redemption. Messiah, the Passover Lamb, would be sacrificed for us
Unleavened Bread	Nisan 15 (Spring)	The going out of Egypt	The Tomb	Speaks of sanctification. Messiah's body would not decay in the grave
Firstfruits	Nisan 16 (Spring)	Crossing the Red Sea	Resurrection	Speaks of resurrection. Messiah would rise triumphantly from the grave on the third day
Weeks/Shavuot (Pentecost)	50 days after Firstfruits	Giving of the Law at Mount Sinai	Holy Spirit-Pentecost	Weeks/Shavuot speaks of origination. Messiah would send the Holy Spirit to inaugurate the New Covenant and Church Age
Trumpets/Rosh Hashanah	Tishri 1 (Autumn)	To prepare people for Atonement and Tabernacles	The Rapture (catching up)	Trumpets/Rosh Hashanah points to the future day when the Messiah our Bridegroom comes for His Bride
Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement	Tishri 10 (Autumn)	Priest opened Holy of Holies. Cleansing of sins of people	Christ's Second Coming	Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement points to the future day when Israel repents of her sins and turns to the Messiah for Salvation. (looking on the One who they have pierced)
Tabernacles/ Sukkot	Tishri 15-21 (Autumn)	Entering into the Promised Land with great rejoicing	The Millennial Kingdom	Tabernacles/Sukkot points to the future day when the Messiah sets up the Messianic Kingdom and tabernacles/dwells among men ruling from Jerusalem.