

## THE SPRING FEASTS OF THE LORD

The Feasts of Israel – also called Feasts of the Lord – are found in Lev. 23.

God gave the children of Israel a holy calendar – “appointed times”. They’re fixed. They’re set in stone. They’re not going to change.

The reason God gave the children of Israel the Feasts was to lead them to their Messiah – their Savior – Jesus.

We will see that every festival given to the children of Israel points to Jesus. Every festival has its fulfillment in the Messiah.

Did you know that the first coming of the Messiah and His second coming are recorded in the Torah?

His death, resurrection, reign from Jerusalem. . .this is found in the Feasts of the Lord.

The feasts are not only historical (having occurred in history; commemorating an event in history), they are prophetic.

Each feast was observed in the history of the Jewish people (Passover – night before the Exodus; Unleavened Bread – the actual Exodus; First Fruits – at the barley harvest; Shavuot – thought to commemorate the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai).

However, each feast looked forward to a future event which gave the feast its deeper meaning – its fulfillment.

We have the feast – and then we have “the rest of the story”!

Because the Feasts are prophetic - we note the fulfillment of some of the Feasts, i.e. Jesus was crucified on Passover. He rose on the Feast of First Fruits. The Church was born on Pentecost.

The fulfillment of each of the first four feasts occurred on the date of the feast!!! This is HUGE!

These feasts – these appointed times - are God’s plan of Redemption/God’s plan of Salvation. AND - when you understand the Feasts of Israel – you can better understand the Bible.

There are 7 Feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Feast of First Fruits, Pentecost/Shavuot, Feast of Trumpets, Yom Kippur, Feast of Tabernacles.

The first three point to the Messiah’s first coming (Spring feasts).

The last three point to His second coming (Fall feasts)

The religious year of the children of Israel began with the Spring Festivals:

Passover (Lev. 23:5) (Exodus 12)

“Pesach” – to pass over. Root meaning: to spread the wings over (for protection)  
It occurs in the first month of the Jewish religious or Biblical calendar, Nisan.

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What did God tell the children of Israel to do during this feast? On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan they were to bring a lamb into the household to live w/ them for four days. This lamb became their “friend” – a part of their family. During that time it was scrutinized – to determine that it was without blemish.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan the lamb who had become their friend – the unblemished lamb was slaughtered.

Progression: “a” lamb (Ex. 12:3), “the” lamb (Ex. 12:4), “your” lamb (Ex. 12:5).

Ex. 12: 6 - tells us that the entire assembly of Israel would kill “it” (the lamb) for the whole assembly (prophetic; Isa. 53:5-8).

Historically, (Ex. 12) at the first Passover when the lamb was killed its blood was applied to the doorposts of the home (top and sides). Those who had the blood applied to their doorposts were delivered as the Lord passed through the land of Egypt. The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt.

Passover is clearly a picture of redemption – physical deliverance from Egypt (Egypt is a type of the world [Gen. 12; Isa. 30:2; Isa. 31:1]). Bondage was immediately changed into liberty. This was the beginning of a new life. Deliverance = new birth. . . .

The physical deliverance of the first Passover foreshadows a spiritual redemption from the bondage of sin.

Passover is pre-Law – it was given/it occurred prior to the Law given to Israel at Mt. Sinai. The application of the Passover goes further than - just for the children of Israel.

IN FACT – as the children of Israel were led out of Egypt – strangers accompanied them – a mixed multitude came out with them – Ex. 12:38.

Fulfillment of Gen. 12:3 – all the world would be blessed through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Abrahamic Covenant is the constitution of our salvation.

From the foundation of the world God intended that the salvation of the world was tied to the children of Israel.

That’s why Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4:22 “Salvation is of the Jews.”

How does the Feast of Passover speak to God’s plan of eternal redemption?

Jesus is our Passover (I Cor. 5:7). He is the Passover Lamb who came unto His own – was brought into the house of Israel – at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan.

For four days He lived among His people – His family. During that time He was scrutinized and declared w/o blemish by the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:60), by Pilate (Matt. 27:24), by Herod (Luke 23:15) by the thief on the cross (Luke 23:41). . .

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Yet on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan, at 9 a.m. – as the Passover lamb was tied to the altar in the Temple – Jesus was nailed to the cross. At 3 p.m., as the high priest slit the throat of the Passover lamb in the Temple, Jesus cried at the same hour, “It is finished”.

Passover is a picture of our eternal redemption through the shed blood of the Passover Lamb.

The blood at the first Passover had to be applied to the doorposts and lintel of each home. We need to apply Jesus’ blood to our hearts.

Passover speaks to Israel’s ultimate redemption in Jesus.

Passover speaks to God’s plan for the world (Gen. 12:3).

As a mixed multitude was delivered with the children of Israel – from Egypt – God’s ultimate plan is that there will be salvation for all the families of the earth through the Jews (Gen. 12:3).

Ex. 12:14, 17, 21 – Passover shall be kept as a memorial forever.

Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8)

In Ex. 12 (vv. 14-15) we see Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrated together. Luke 22:1 states that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is called the Passover. (Matt. 26:17; Mk. 14:1).

What is unleavened bread? (bread w/out yeast)

What is leaven? Leaven is symbolic of sin (Matt. 16:6 12; I Cor. 5:6-7). Bread without leaven depicts a life that is free from sin.

According to Lev. 23 Passover is to be celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan – for 7 days.

During the first Feast of Unleavened Bread – the children of Israel left Egypt. The blood had been applied and now they were delivered from Egypt by God.

Egypt has been a symbol of the world in Scripture (Isa. 30:2; Isa. 31:1)..

Abraham disobeyed God and went down to Egypt when there was a famine in the land (Gen.12:10ff)

Joseph's brothers meant evil to befall him – and hoped that a caravan would come and take him to Egypt.

In being delivered from Egypt, the children of Israel were beginning a new life. They were being set apart. . . . They were sanctified.

What occurs when we are redeemed? God delivers us from the penalty of sin and declares us righteous. We are justified (declared righteous) – Rom. 5:16-19

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And then He sets us apart for a specific purpose – to God – for His work. We are sanctified. (Ephesians 2:8-10) We are consecrated.

In Hebrew thought – it is to be set apart from ordinary usage for a special purpose.

In Moses' day, God commanded Moses to sanctify the people prior to giving the Law at Sinai (Ex. 19:10, 14); Aaron and his sons are sanctified to minister to God in the priest's office (Ex. 28:41); God sanctifies Israel as His own special nation (Ezek. 37:28); Samuel sanctifies Jesse and his son prior to offering sacrifice (I Sam. 16:5); Jeremiah is set apart – sanctified – for the work of a prophet (Jer. 1:5); the temple in Jerusalem is sanctified (II Chron. 7:16). . . .

Sanctification is a process whereby we are saved from the power of sin.

Sanctification is dying to self and living to God.

Positionally - we are crucified with Jesus – Gal. 2:20. We die to sin.

Experientially – we need to continue to put to death the old man – the old nature – Eph. 4:22-24, 30.

Chronologically the Feast of Unleavened Bread coincides with the burial of Jesus. (Matt. 27:57) He was crucified on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan at 9 a.m. He died at 3 p.m. Unleavened Bread began at 6 p.m. – when He was buried in the tomb – which was the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan.

How does this Feast speak to God's plan of redemption? This feast speaks to our sanctification – we are buried with the Messiah (and raised to a new life.) We identify with His death (and with His resurrection.)

Feast of First Fruits (Lev. 23:9-14)

In Jewish culture the first fruits was the earliest harvest in Israel, the barley harvest. During this feast the barley sheaves were waved as an offering before the Lord. Jewish thought was that if God was faithful to bless us with the early harvest – He will surely bless us with the later harvest.

The Feast of First Fruits fell after the Sabbath (Lev. 23:11). No specific date in the month is given by God.

If Passover, which coincides with Jesus' crucifixion, was on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan – what would've happened following the Sabbath after the crucifixion?

The Feast of First Fruits speaks to Jesus' resurrection.

(There was a "special Sabbath" the year Jesus was crucified – John 19:31)

In this festival the grain that had come from the earth was lifted up for all to see. Jesus told His disciples in John 12:23-24 – "I tell you that unless a grain falls to the ground and dies, it stays just as a grain; but if it dies – it produces a great harvest."

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I Cor. 15:20 says, "But now is Messiah risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." Because Jesus rose – we who are believers in Him are guaranteed eternal life.

The Feast of First Fruits is clearly the resurrection of Jesus and is the promise of our resurrection. Jesus' resurrection produces a great harvest – us – believers in Jesus.

Just as He rose from the dead – we who are in Him – will rise from the dead.

Passover/Unleavened Bread/First Fruits – speak to the three aspects of salvation:

Redemption

Sanctification

Glorification

Seven weeks or on the 50<sup>th</sup> day following the Feast of First Fruits we have the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) (Lev. 23:15-21)

This is the latter fruits of the Spring harvest.

The Feast of Pentecost/Shavuot – historically occurred 7 weeks following the Feast of First Fruits – or on the 50<sup>th</sup> day following the Feast of First Fruits (Jesus' resurrection). Shavuot means weeks; Pentecost means 50.

Pentecost was a time when thousands of Jews journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate. Why? They were told by God to do so. In Deut. 16:16 we read that God required Jewish males to travel to Jerusalem three times during the year – at the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost.

50 days following the resurrection of Jesus – thousands of Jews gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Shavuot. Acts 2:5 states that “there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.”

From an historical perspective, why did the children of Israel celebrate the Feast of Shavuot?

Jewish tradition says that the Feast of Shavuot commemorates God giving the commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai. We don't find this specifically stated in Scripture; the Rabbis have taught this down through the centuries. Although, there is some indication from Ex. 19:1 that the law was given around this feast. Ex. 19:1 states that the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sinai in the third month since leaving Egypt. Shavuot would fall in the third month. In Ex. 19 we see the giving of the law.

On the historical Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost – when God gave Moses the commandments, while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai, we read in Ex. 32 that the children of Israel were out of control down below. They were worshipping a golden calf. When Moses came down to the people and witnessed this perversion, he said whoever is for the

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Lord come to me. The sons of Levi moved toward Moses. Moses then instructed them to kill their fellow Israelites. Ex. 32:28 tells us that “about 3,000” Jewish people died that day.

On the Feast of Pentecost – 50 days following the resurrection of Jesus – what does Acts 3:4 say? “About 3,000” people were given eternal life.

What an amazing contrast is taught within this one Feast.

Part of the wheat offering during this Feast was baked into two loaves of leavened bread and brought into the Temple and waved in all directions before the Lord. - expressing their dependence upon God for the harvest.

This was a celebration. This was a thanksgiving offering. What were they celebrating? They were celebrating the present harvest – they were thankful that God had provided for them. But, they were also celebrating the future harvest.

Remember - the Jewish mindset is that - as God has given us an ingathering now – as God has blessed us with a harvest now – He will bless us with a future harvest. AND – God gave the children of Israel these feasts when they were in the wilderness BEFORE they got to the land to grow anything!!!! Talk about looking forward with faith!

The two loaves represent Jew and Gentile. The Church is comprised of both Jew and Gentile. Eph. 3:6 states that the mystery hidden in the OT was that the Gentiles should

be fellow heirs with the Jews – they would be part of the same body – the body of the Messiah - the Church.

These loaves were baked with leaven.

Leaven is yeast. Leaven traditionally became a type – to the Jewish mind – of the sinful human nature.

The Apostle Paul, who had been a Pharisee, a disciple of Gamaliel of the Jewish School of Hillel, made a spiritual application concerning leaven. “Get rid of the old yeast – the old leaven.” Paul calls it the leaven or yeast of malice and wickedness in I Cor. 5:8. Leaven symbolizes sin.

The fact that these two loaves – representing Jew and Gentile - were baked with leaven - speaks to the sin in our lives. Yes – believers – Jews and Gentiles - are saved from the penalty of sin. But we won’t be saved from the presence of sin until we are in heaven.

On the Feast of Shavuot today in synagogues – the Book of Ruth is read. What does the Book of Ruth teach? The Book of Ruth tells us of God’s plan of redemption. God provided for the destitute through the law of the redemption of the land in Israel. A near relative called a kinsman redeemer, could buy back property for one in his family – one

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in his family who was destitute. In the book of Ruth we read that Boaz, the kinsman redeemer, bought the land back for Naomi and took Ruth as his bride – all in the same transaction. Naomi was Jewish; Ruth was Gentile. The Book of Ruth speaks to Jesus, our Kinsman Redeemer, redeeming both Jew and Gentile – the two loaves.

And, let’s remember the Jewish mindset – as God has blessed us with an ingathering now – of a harvest now – He will bless us with a future harvest. The “about 3,000” people who were brought into the body of the Messiah on Pentecost were a guarantee of a future harvest. What is the future harvest? Who is the future harvest? Us!!

The Feast of Pentecost speaks to the promise of eternal life – to both Jew and Gentile – baptized into the body of the Messiah – by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13).

The first four feasts have been fulfilled.

We are now in the Harvest time (Lev. 23: 22)

This is not a feast of the Lord. It is a period of time.

The children of Israel were told not to clear the corners of the land at harvest time. By not clearing the corners they would provide for the poor and the sojourners – the Gentiles.

The field is open to the poor and to the sojourner/stranger (the Gentile).

This coincides with Gen. 12:3 – God would bless all the families of the earth through the Jewish people.

This is the Church Age – a parenthesis, a bloop. . . .

Because the Jews (NOT all) have rejected Jesus as their Messiah – the Gentiles have been grafted in. Salvation has come to the Gentiles (altho' this was always God's plan).

Romans 11:25 – blindness in part has happened to Israel – until the fullness of the Gentiles is come in.

It's harvest time. It's Lev. 23:22. The Jews have provided for the Gentiles. Thank your Jewish friend for this gift and share this gift – Jesus, the Jewish Messiah – with them.