

ISRAEL: THE EPICENTER OF GOD'S PLAN WEEK 6

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD – Lev. 23

God gave the children of Israel a timeline known as the Feasts of the Lord. They're also known as God's "appointed times." God has made His plan for the world known to us; and He has even given us a timetable for the end of the age. This plan has been laid out in the Feasts that He gave to the children of Israel in the wilderness.

Lev. 23:1-2 - These feasts are described in Lev. 23:2 as God's appointed times – and they clearly outline God's **plan of redemption**. The feasts are called "appointed times" because they are fixed; they are not going to change - because God does not change (Malachi 3:6). His plan for our deliverance is unchangeable!

Each feast commemorates either an historical event in the history of Israel OR – the major feasts surround a harvest time. Through these feasts we see God's hand of PROVISION.

Each feast was PROPHETICAL – each feast looked forward to a future event – its fulfillment. We have the feast – and then we have "the rest of the story"! That "rest of the story" or the "BEST of the story" is JESUS. God gave the feasts to the Jewish people to point them to the Messiah. The feasts of the Lord which God gave to Israel are JESUS FEASTS.

There are 7 Feasts of the Lord as noted in Lev. 23:

- The first 4 feasts are the Spring feasts because they occur in the – Spring! They point to Jesus' FIRST COMING and they have already been fulfilled in Jesus. The rest of the story has occurred.
- The last 3 feasts are the Fall feasts because they occur in the – Fall! These point to Jesus' SECOND COMING and they have yet to be fulfilled. We have yet to see the rest of the story.

PASSOVER - Lev. 23:4-5

Specific date and month are noted – 14th day of the first month of Nisan (equating to our March/April timeframe). 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 – and the firstborn in the home w/ the blood on the doorposts was spared.

Passover is clearly a picture of redemption – deliverance. Bondage was immediately changed into liberty. This was the beginning of a new life – a new birth. And this new life affected others. It immediately impacted Gentiles. As the children of Israel were led out of Egypt – strangers accompanied them – a mixed multitude came out with them – Ex. 12:38. Gen. 12:3 – all the world would be blessed through the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

From the foundation of the world God intended that the salvation of the world would be 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." The first believers in Jesus were Jewish. The 144,000 evangelists during the Tribulation – will be Jews (male Jewish virgins [Rev. 7 & Rev. 14]). During the Millennium the Jews will be the ones who tell the nations about the one true God (Zech. 8:23).

How does the Feast of Passover speak to God's Plan of Redemption? Jesus is our Passover (I Cor. 5:7). He was crucified on the 14th day of Nisan! At 9 a.m. – as the Passover animal lambs were 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 redemption through the shed blood of the Passover Lamb.

The fulfillment of the Passover is Jesus' crucifixion when His blood was shed on the cross. Jesus' crucifixion occurred on the same day as the historic feast of Passover – on the 14th of Nisan.

Application – this feast pointing to Jesus' crucifixion points to our redemption – our salvation!

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD – Lev. 23:6-8

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was part of the Passover. It was observed on the 15th day of Nisan - (Lev. 23:6-8) the day after the lamb was slain.

- Leaven is a symbol of sin in the Scriptures.
- Unleavened bread speaks to being – sinless.
- On the 15th of Nisan the children of Israel left Egypt. Egypt is seen in Scripture as a symbol of the world (Ex. 16:3; Isa. 30:2; Isa. 31:1). God had passed over His people because of the blood – and now He was separating them from the world (Egypt). In Scripture Egypt is used as a picture of the world (Isa. 30; Isa. 31).
- The children of Israel had been redeemed through the blood of the lamb and now God was separating them from the world - setting them apart for His purpose.
- The rest of the story or the fulfillment: Jesus, our sinless Passover Lamb was buried in the tomb on the 15th of Nisan.
- Application to our salvation experience: The Apostle Paul tells us in Gal. 2:20 that when we are redeemed, we are crucified with the Messiah – we are to die to self. We who trust in Jesus are separated from the world. This speaks to the believer's sanctification.

FEAST OF FIRST FRUITS – Lev. 23:9-14

In Jewish culture, “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. The Jewish mindset - if God was faithful to bless them with the early harvest – He would surely bless them with the LATER HARVEST!

- Jesus was crucified on Passover – the 14th of Nisan.
- He was buried on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – the 15th of Nisan.
- First Fruits was on the day following the Sabbath.
- Jesus was resurrected on the Feast of First Fruits!
- In the celebration of 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.”
- I Cor. 15:23 tells us that Jesus is our First Fruits! He has gone before us – He is our GUARANTEE!
- The Feast of First Fruits is clearly fulfilled in Jesus’ resurrection and it is the promise of the believer’s resurrection.
- The application - because He rose, we who are in Him – who trust in His gift of forgiveness for eternal life – will rise from the dead.
 - Jesus’ resurrection produces a great harvest – US – believers in Jesus!

FEAST OF SHAVUOT (WEEKS) – Lev. 23:15-21

Fifty days following the Feast of First Fruits, on the Jewish feast of Shavuot (“weeks”) (we call this feast Pentecost which means “50”), the Holy Spirit of God Whom Jesus had promised, indwelled “about 3,000” who rec’d Jesus as their Messiah (Acts 2:41).

Traditional Judaism teaches that the Feast of Shavuot commemorates the giving of the law. Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the law and saw the idolatry that was going on in the worship of the golden calf – “about 3,000” died that day (Exodus 32:28). What a contrast between the “about 3000” who died at the giving of the law and the “about 3000” who lived when the Holy Spirit came down to indwell. II Cor. 3:6b tells us that the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.

What was the fulfillment of Shavuot? The Holy Spirit descended, indwelled believers, and the Church was born (I Cor. 12:13).

Application: The Church – the body of the Messiah – comprised of both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus – was born on the Feast of Pentecost/Shavuot. Jewish and Gentile believers were fellow heirs in one body – the body of the Messiah.

All the Spring feasts given to the children of Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus and they speak to our salvation. Because Jesus has fulfilled the first four feasts on the day of the

actual feast, we know that He will fulfill the last three feasts – on the day of the actual feast! The last three feasts known as the Fall feasts address end times!

FEAST OF TRUMPETS – Lev. 23:23-25

On the Feast of Trumpets, trumpets will be blown! This day in the Jewish community is called Rosh Hashanah. In Biblical times, the people would assemble at the sound of the shofar. The harvest was over. It was time for inner reflection – a time of repentance – and a time of looking forward to forgiveness and restoration at the Day of Atonement at Yom Kippur which would follow 10 days after. Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets) and Yom Kippur – 10 days of awe. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the Jewish High Holy Days.

Today on the Feast of Trumpets/Rosh Hashanah, at sundown, the Jewish people are called to worship with the blast of the shofar. A shofar is a ram's horn. In synagogues on Rosh Hashanah, Genesis 22 is read. Genesis 22 is called "The Akidah" (the binding) – the account of God instructing Abraham to take his son whom he LOVED (the father taking his ONLY son whom he LOVED) to the region called Moriah – and to offer him as a sacrifice.

Gen. 22:11-12 we read that the Angel of the Lord called out to Abraham and said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad. . . ." Gen. 22:13 tells us that there was a ram caught in the thicket – as the substitute for Isaac. We see the principle of a substitutional sacrifice – a LIFE FOR A LIFE! We have the ram in the account – thus the shofar, the ram's horn, is blown on Rosh Hashanah.

Yet, in Gen. 22:8, Abraham told Isaac that God would provide HIMSELF the Lamb! (in the Hebrew). BUT, a ram was caught in the thicket. In this verse we see the promise of the lamb being provided who is God. Who is this? Jesus, our perfect Passover Lamb!

Genesis 22 is read at Rosh Hashanah in synagogues over the globe!

In Israel's history the shofar was blown for many reasons, some include:

- calling an assembly together
- signaling the people of impending danger
- calling the children of Israel to war
- the shofar was blown when a king ascended to his throne
- in Isaiah 27:13 we are told that the (shofar) great trumpet will be blown at the future restoration of Israel
- **to announce the resurrection of the dead - !!! according to Jewish tradition**
- As a call to repentance. It was a call to the dead to arise and live again – to wake them up from sin to regeneration through repentance.

At Rosh Hashanah in traditional/Rabbinical Judaism today the ram's horn is blown to call the people to assemble and to repent. At Rosh Hashanah – Jewish people seek reconciliation with man. At Yom Kippur – Jewish people seek reconciliation with God. How can we get right with our fellow man if we don't first get right with God?

The Feast of Trumpets is a serious time of introspection. It's a time when Jewish people are to consider the sins of the previous year and they are to repent before Yom Kippur. According to Jewish tradition, it is believed that at Yom Kippur the books are sealed for the next year – and so is one's fate – for ONE year!

WHAT BOOKS?

According to Jewish tradition, when the shofar is blown, three books are opened in the heavenly courts:

- One for the completely righteous
- One for the completely wicked
- One for the intermediates

According to tradition, the completely righteous are immediately inscribed in the book of life. The completely wicked are immediately inscribed in the book of death. The intermediates (average persons) are kept in suspense from Rosh Hashanah until the Day of Yom Kippur. Jewish mindset - If their good deeds outweigh their bad, they are then inscribed in the book of life – MAYBE – for the next year – for ONE year!

If reconciliation (a relationship w/ God) is based on mitzvahs – on good deeds – how good is good enough? God's standard is PERFECTION. The Jewish prophet, Isaiah, answered the “how good is good enough” question. He wrote in Isaiah 64:6, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. . . .” in God's sight. There's no assurance of eternal life when a person is basing their hope on good works. Our hope must be based on GOD and what He has done for us! God alone is perfect.

On Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish people gather to begin a time of repentance – for the year. The Feast of Trumpets as we see in Scripture is a holy day of gathering.

The fulfillment: God has been gathering His people into the land of Israel for a time of repentance. The TRIBULATION – the time of Jacob's Trouble (Jer. 30:7) – which is yet to occur. The Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled in the Tribulation.

Eze. 20 & Eze. 22 speak to God gathering the children of Israel back to the land (in His fury) to purge them -- to REFINE them – and ultimately to restore them. As we read about the time of Jacob's Trouble in Scripture, we see at the end of 7 years of Tribulation, a time of restoration for Israel, following their repentance. Scripture teaches that repentance MUST precede restoration!

Application: when God purges and refines us – there is repentance.

The message of the Feasts of the Lord - THERE IS A FUTURE RESTORATION FOR ISRAEL!

YOM KIPPUR/DAY OF ATONEMENT – Lev. 23:26-32

On Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement, the Jewish people cry out for forgiveness.

Lev. 16 tells us that each year Israel offered a blood sacrifice on that day. The Lord's goat was killed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies. Then the High Priest placed his hands on the scapegoat and confessed over it the sins of Israel. The scapegoat was then led into the desert – and escorted to a precipice over which it fell to its death. That was a picture of Israel's sins being forgiven – through the blood that was shed. Lev. 17:11 – God required blood for the atonement of sin.

There is no blood shed today in the observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. There is no Temple (70 AD), no altar, no sacrifice, no blood. Therefore, there is no atonement in Rabbinical Judaism today because the way of forgiveness through the blood of the Messiah is ignored. While Yom Kippur speaks to restoration – there is no restoration in Judaism today w/out the blood. In Rabbinical Judaism today – when the shofar is blown at the end of Yom Kippur, they believe their fate is sealed for – ONE YEAR. And, the next year our Jewish friends will go through the entire ritual again – hoping to be restored.

The fulfillment of Yom Kippur: Yom Kippur will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Jesus, when Israel repents and God pours out His Spirit and the Messiah comes again to rule from Jerusalem (Zech. 12:10ff; Zech. 14:1-4).

Application: Scripture tells us that only those who have been forgiven their sin through the blood of God's ultimate sacrifice – the Messiah – JESUS - will see God face-to-face.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES – Lev. 23:33-43

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the Feast of Ingathering, The Feast, and The Season of our Rejoicing. Jewish people call this feast – Sukkot/Sukkas.

The Feast of Trumpets looks forward to a gathering and judgment during the Tribulation and ultimately repentance. Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement looks forward to restoration at Jesus' Second Coming. Because of Israel's restoration – they will rejoice at the Feast of Tabernacles. God's way is always judgment, repentance, restoration followed by REJOICING in what HE has done!

In Ex. 25:8 God told the Jewish people He desired to dwell with them. God instructed the children of Israel in the wilderness to dwell in booths called sukkas (woven) for 7

days. These were temporary dwellings that were flimsy. The roof was to be of boughs and leafy things. As in every feast, God wanted Israel to know of His faithfulness – His provision for them. These flimsy booths symbolized man’s need to depend upon God for everything while we live temporarily on this earth – looking forward to the day when GOD will dwell/tabernacle with us. These booths were a reminder that God would shelter His people.

At the Feast of Tabernacles, the people were told to wave palm, myrtle, and willow branches (Lev. 23:40) before the Lord – Who is God – Who is King. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey days before His crucifixion – what did the people save before Him? (John 12:13) How did they hail Him? (King of Israel). John 1:14 – “And the Word became flesh and DWELT among us. . . .” Jesus came once and He’s coming again. The Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom when He will dwell with us!

In Jesus’ day the Feast of Tabernacles had grown to a festival of grand proportions. Jerusalem was crowded with Jewish pilgrims. The water-drawing ceremony had become part of the Feast in Jesus’ day. An assigned Levitical priest, accompanied by a throng of worshippers, descended to the Pool of Siloam and filled his golden pitcher w/ water while the people chanted from Isa. 12:3, “Therefore, with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Messianic fervor was heightened due to the oppression by Rome. The cry for a Deliverer – the Messiah - was constant. The crowd then returned to the Temple from the Pool of Siloam and the priest circled the altar and poured the water into a silver basin upon the altar while the crowds chanted the words of Psalm 118:25, “O Lord, do save, we beseech Thee.” (Hallel [praise]).

On the last day of the feast the priest would once again draw the water but instead of circling the altar once, he would circle it 7 times while the crowd continued to call out to God to save them.

Israel was an agricultural society. This was a water drawing ceremony. Rain was seen as necessary for the life of their crops. They were crying out for rain – but they were also crying out for deliverance. This water drawing ceremony held a significance much deeper than the agricultural implications. Water represents the Holy Spirit. The water drawing pointed to that day when, according to Joel 2:28, God would rain His Spirit upon the children of Israel. (Eze. 36:25 – “I will sprinkle you with clean water.”). The people were crying out for salvation – they were crying out for deliverance – they were crying out for the Messiah.

On the last day of the feast, after the water was poured, there was a hush as the people listened – for the wind – for the Holy Spirit of God Who would bring visible results.

At this point in the ceremony, amongst thousands of worshippers who were silent – waiting upon God to deliver His Spirit - a young Rabbi stepped forward and proclaimed, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-38).

Jesus – God incarnate – God in the flesh – dwelling among men – offered Himself at this great feast – the feast which finds its fulfillment in God dwelling with us!!

The message of the Feasts is all about Jesus. AND - He continues to offer Himself to us.

When we realize that we are sinners and that He, as the perfect Passover Lamb, shed His blood for us and when we accept His gift of forgiveness – we are redeemed – we are delivered from sin and we can come before God in heaven when we die. Jesus promises forgiveness FOREVER – He promises and provides for us ETERNAL LIFE. God tells us that today is the day of salvation.

We are on the VERGE! THE TIME IS NOW! We may not be here tomorrow. You may not be here tomorrow. What are you going to do – today – w/ the message of the feasts of Israel?

Recommended Reading

Israel's Holy Days in Type and Prophecy – Fuchs

The Fall Feasts of Israel – Mitch & Zhava Glaser

God's Appointed Times - Kasdan