

The Feasts of the LORD

The feasts of Jehovah illustrate the entire outline of God's dealings with mankind throughout the ages of time.

AJ Holiday: *The feasts are types setting before us, in a wonderfully complete manner, the whole of God's dealings with man in redeeming grace from the time that He first placed him in the garden until the end shall have come and the Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to his father.*

The Setting of the Feasts

Genesis is the book of *foundations* and introduces the pioneers of *faith*; **Exodus** is the book of *freedom* as God's people were redeemed from Egypt; **Leviticus** is the book of *fellowship* with commandments to govern approach to God's sanctuary and presence.

The book of Leviticus itself divides into three clear sections:

- Leviticus 1-9: **Worship**. Note references to *sacrifice, offering and blood*.
- Leviticus 10-17: **Washing**. The two main words for *washing* <03526> <07364> occur 50 times in this section with only seven other references in the entire book. Note the emphasis too on *water* (37 references).
- Leviticus 18-27: **Walk**. Note references to *holiness, sanctification and statutes*. *Leviticus 26.13: I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, from being their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and caused you to walk upright. NET*

In this final section of the book God is teaching His people *how to walk*. Now they have been redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb they belong to Jehovah. Their conduct must be different to that of the Egyptians (Leviticus 18.3-4) and fitting for those in covenant relationship with the Holy One. They were now associated with the great name of Jehovah. *Leviticus 11.44: Ye shall be holy; for I am holy. As Redeemer, God therefore makes a claim upon His people's spiritual lives (worship), personal lives (family, property) and, as illustrated in the feasts, social lives (time, holidays).*

The Study of the Feasts

There are *four* passages that reference the feasts. Exodus 23.14-17 emphasises **who** (my saints and my portion); Leviticus 23 emphasises **when** (my seasons and my programme); Numbers 28-29 emphasises **what** (my sacrifices and my pleasure) and Deuteronomy 16 emphasises **where** (my sanctuary and my place). Three times in the year all the males were to appear before the Lord. It was a privilege and pleasure to travel up to Jerusalem for these feasts. It is believed that Psalms 122-134 (Songs of Degrees/Ascent) were chanted by joyful pilgrims as they journeyed (cf. Psalm 122.1). But, the journey also brought responsibility. It was unacceptable to appear before the Lord empty handed (Exodus 23.15); each was to give willingly, as they were able, and bring of the first fruits of the harvest with which the Lord had blessed them. All was done with *thanksgiving, rejoicing and remembrance* (Deuteronomy 16.10-12, 17).

There are *three* key words used in relation to the feasts in Leviticus 23:

- 'feast' <04150>, *mowed*. Six references in the chapter (v.2, 4, 37, 44). Also occurs in Exodus 23.15 ('time appointed'), Numbers 28.2 ('due season'), 29.39 ('set feasts') and Deuteronomy 16.6 ('season'). The word *mowed* means a 'fixed' or 'appointed' time. The feasts were therefore Jehovah's appointments – **HIS gatherings**; He was the host and His people were the guests. Related is the phrase 'Feasts of Jehovah' – He is the author. Note. These feasts had become 'feasts of the Jews' in the days of the Lord Jesus (John 2.13, 5.1, 7.2). The outward form may have been present, but inwardly the hearts of the people had grown cold and departed from their God. There was now a lifeless formality. May it never be so in relation to the 'Lord's Supper'!
- 'convocation' <04744>, *miqra*. Eleven references in the chapter (v.2, 3 etc.). Also occurs six times in Numbers 28-29. The word *miqra* means a 'sacred assembly' or 'calling together'. Here was a called out company, separated unto their God. These feasts were **HOLY gatherings**, marked by reverence and fellowship. It was important for God's people from all over Israel to gather together in one place and share their experiences of God's goodness.
- 'feast' <02282>, *chag*. Four references in the chapter (v.6, 34, 39, 41). The word is only used in reference to the feasts of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 23.15), Pentecost (Exodus 23.16) and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16.13, 16) and has the thought of 'celebration' and 'joy'. The feasts were **HAPPY gatherings** not only on the part of the people as they remembered their blessings from the hand of God (cf. Exodus 15), but also on the part of Jehovah. These feasts were celebrations of His own joy and delight in the Person and work of His Son. Has this world deprived us of the joy of our salvation?

Note. There are three prepositions used in Leviticus 23 in relation to the feasts. They were feasts **of** the Lord (v.4) suggesting divine *authorship* and the consequent responsibility of obedience; feasts **unto** the Lord (v.6) suggesting He is the *aim* of the gatherings and feasts **before** the Lord (v.40) reminding us of their holy *atmosphere*. His watchful eye is ever upon us.

It is important to recognise that some feasts were single days (e.g. Passover) whereas others extended for a period of seven days (e.g. Tabernacles). This is significant as those feasts which were single day events point forward to unique, *once for all* fulfilments (Passover = Calvary). However, a longer feast suggests an on-going benefit of those unique events (Tabernacles = a future life of blessing and rest for Israel in the millennium on the basis of the Day of Atonement).

The Seasons of the Feasts

The feasts were designed around the agricultural year of Israel. For example, the first three feasts came at barley harvest (Nisan/Abib), the feast of Pentecost at wheat harvest (Sivan) and the final three feasts at the vintage or grape harvest (Tishri).

Israel had both a religious and civil calendar. The civil calendar began on the 1st Tishri which was the seventh month in the religious calendar. This was all by divine design. *Exodus 12.1-2: And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.* This means that Abib (Nisan) became the first month of the year for Israel even though it was the seventh month in the civil calendar. God blotted out six months of the year! Is this significant? God was making a new beginning with His people, but this must be based on a new foundation – the slain Passover lamb. In Egypt, Israel was in bondage, serving Pharaoh and his gods (man in his natural state away from God). But, to this downtrodden people redemption and deliverance came. God separated them unto Himself (Exodus 19.4). **Ritchie:** *Now Jehovah is able to reveal to them what was in His heart and invite them to share with him the great things which had been the subjects of his thoughts from eternal ages.*

God has done the same at the cross (the antitype of Passover). Mankind in the flesh (pictured by the number six) was brought to an end before Him. Adamic manhood was on trial before Calvary but, having utterly failed, was judicially condemned and terminated by God. *Romans 8.3: For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.* **Leckie:** *The cross brought to an end human effort or human works as the ground of acceptance before God (Romans 10.4). The death of Christ introduces a new era; a new beginning of months.*

THE SEVEN SET FEASTS OF JEHOVAH AND THEIR PROPHETICAL FULFILMENT

Commemorative Festivals of Israel's Past Historical Events					Festivals Shadowing Israel's Future Restoration						
Israel Past & Future	Sprinkling of the Blood (Ex. 12:1-14) 14 th day	Eating the Unleavened (Ex. 12:15-20, Josh. 5:11) 14 th to 21 st day	The Sheaf of First Fruit (Josh. 5:12)			The Two Wave Loaves	Israel Scattered Among the Nations	Blowing of Trumpets	The day of Reconciliation	Dwelling in Booths Sabbath to Sabbath	
	FIRST MONTH				THIRD MONTH			SEVENTH MONTH			
Old Testament Type	1 The Passover Lev. 23:4-5 (Deut. 16:1-8)	2 The Feast of Unleavened Bread Lev. 23:6-8 (7 Days)	3 The Feast of First Fruits Lev. 23:9-14 (Deut. 16:9)	The Seven Week Interval	4 The Feast of Weeks Lev. 23:15-21 (Deut. 16:9-12)		The Harvest Interval Lev. 23:22 (Lev. 19:9,10; Deut. 24:19-22)	5 The Feast of Trumpets Lev. 23:23-25 (Num. 10:7-10; 29:1-6; Ps. 81:3)	6 The Day of the Atonement Lev. 23:26-32 (Num. 29:7-11)	7 The Feast of Tabernacles Lev. 23:33-43 (Num. 29:12-40; Deut. 16:13-15)	
New Testament Reality	14 th day Thursday	15 th day A Sabbath Day Friday	17 th day Morrow After the Sabbath Sunday	Week of Sabbath Seven Sabbaths	50 th day Morrow After the Sabbath Sunday			1 st day Sabbath day (New moon day)	10 th day	15 th to 22 nd day Sabbath to Sabbath	
	Christ our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7)	Believers holy walk in Christ (1 Cor. 5:7-9)	Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 1:15-18)	"Tarry ye" "Wait" (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4)	Descent of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12,13; Act. 2:1; James 1:18)		The Lord seated at the right-hand of God The Great High Priest (1 Pet. 3:22; Heb. 4:14-16)	Christ's Bema Seat ↑	Israel Regathered Mat. 24:31	Israel Restored (Zech. 12:10) (Dan. 9:24)	Israel Reinstated Ezek Ch 36 & 37 Zech. 14:9-21 Millennium
	Redemption	Sanctification	Justification		Pentecost	Israel Dispersed and blinded (Luke 21:24; Rom. 11:25) Church gathered (Acts 15:14)	Dead in Christ raised (1 Thess. 4:14-17) and living saints caught up	Awakening	Reclaiming	Restoration	
PAST					PRESENT		FUTURE				