

Should We Keep God's Feasts Today? Part 2

After reading the previous lesson, you've seen many reasons why the Holy Days should be observed by all true Christians today – for not only were they observed throughout New Testament times, but they will be observed by true Christians for eternity to come (**Zechariah 14:16, Matthew 26:29, Isaiah 66:23**).

Yet, since they are universally dismissed by modern Christianity, very few people have any idea what they are, much less realize that we should keep them today – to say nothing of understanding the glorious plan they reveal!

When you mention the Holy Days to anyone who is the slightest bit religious, they will sneer “those are just Jewish days”, or bring up one out-of-context scripture or another. The previous lesson addressed several of these objections, and now it's time to address the rest before we move on to learning...

LESSON 16: THE FALL FEASTS OF GOD

One verse that will certainly come up as an objection in the mind of any educated Christian is **Galatians 4:9-10**. Now at first that looks like Paul is condemning observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days. But is he? Read it carefully. Does it mention either one? It mentions “days, and months, and times, and years”. Which days? Which months? Which “times” are Paul condemning as “weak and beggarly elements”?

Does it seem probable that Paul condemns the Holy Days as weak and beggarly, while God intends for mankind to continue observing them indefinitely? So what did Paul really mean? I never get tired of saying it: ***read the context!***

Back up and read the passage straight through from **verse 8 to verse 12**. JUST before speaking of these “days” and “times”, Paul spoke of what they did *when they didn't know God!* **In the time when they did service to “them which... ARE NOT GODS”!**

The context is not GOD'S days, times, years, but PAGAN days, times, and years! Then in **verse 12** Paul concludes by begging them to “be as I am”; and we know for a fact that Paul observed the Holy Days!

So what does this passage really mean? Look at **verse 10** again. Now does God command observance of “times”? **Leviticus 19:26**. Do worshipers of God observe “times”? **Deuteronomy 18:10**. Does it provoke God to anger when people observe times? **2 Kings 21:6**. So who observes times? **Deuteronomy 18:14**.

Get that! It is the PAGAN NATIONS that observed “times”! Not the Jews, nor Old Testament Israelites, but PAGANS! These were observances the Galatians had picked up from PAGANS when they “knew not God”, and worshiped deities that “were not gods”!

“I ESTEEM EVERY DAY ALIKE!”

Another verse used to discredit the Holy Days and the Sabbath is **Romans 14:5-6**. Yet ironically, the Sabbath and Holy Days are not mentioned anywhere in the context. The problem Paul was addressing was that, like Catholicism today, Rome had nearly every day of the year dedicated to some god.

Some of these days were accompanied by special rituals, similar to eating turkey on Thanksgiving or black-eyed peas on New Year’s; other days were considered bad luck days like Friday the 13th is today; on still others you didn’t eat meat, similar to Lent, and so on. The days and months were all named after the gods, just as they are in our calendar today. And each god was believed to rule over the activities of their own day and cause good or bad luck for certain types of activities, depending on the particular powers of that god. It was rather like a horoscope is today (and is the ancestor of it). Similar superstitions existed for each year as well.

And new Christians, though technically not pagans anymore, were bringing their old way of life into the church and superstitiously observing these “days, months, times, and years” just as they had “*in times past*”, when they “*did service to those who were not gods*”. Paul vehemently condemned this practice. Just as God had done in the Old Testament in **Hosea 2:13**.

The RSV translates it, “*And I will punish her for the feast days of the Baals [false gods] when she burned incense to them and decked herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers, and forgot me, says the LORD.*”

The world today still observes many of these “feast days of the Baals”, only they have now given these pagan days Christian names such as Christmas, New Year’s, Easter, Valentine’s day, St. Patrick’s day, May Day, Halloween, and so on. Research the origin of those days and you will be shocked! The time is coming when anyone God finds keeping those “feast days of the Baals” will be punished, and that’s God’s promise.

“BUT I’M NOT AN ISRAELITE”

Some people use this reasoning, saying that when God commanded the Holy Days, it only applied to the Israelites/Jews; **Leviticus 23:42** is one of many examples. The answer is simple. First, you might be an Israelite and not know it. After the northern ten tribes of Israel were taken captive by Assyria, they disappeared from the view of most historians. A future lesson will show you exactly who they are today, but you just might be one of them.

But more relevant is the fact you studied in Lesson 11, pages 3-6; by believing the gospel, you have ALREADY become a spiritual Israelite, whether you were born one or not! And if you follow God you have been adopted into the family of Israel, and you have inherited its blessings *as well as its responsibilities*; among which is the yearly observance of these Holy Days.

So, even if that argument were true – which it isn’t, since Gentiles both have kept, and will keep these days – it doesn’t matter, because you ARE an Israelite if you believe the true gospel!

SPRING VS. FALL

So now let's return to the study of the days themselves. There are three Biblical seasons of Holy Days (**Deuteronomy 16:16**); the Feast of UnLeavened Bread (ULB), Pentecost, and the Feast Of Tabernacles (FOT). For the purposes of this concept, the surrounding days (Trumpets, Atonement, Last Great Day) are lumped together into one feast season.

As you studied last time, Pentecost represents the end result of the plan, the conclusion of the work God is doing in this age. So we will set it aside for now and focus on the spring and fall Holy Days.

God thinks His metaphors and symbols through before He uses them. I've yet to pursue one far enough to break the metaphor. And these Holy Days center around the symbolism of the harvests in Israel. There are three main harvest seasons, the barley, the wheat, and everything else. Barley is the earliest grain to ripen, having been planted the fall before, and it ripens near Passover time.

At that time, the wheat is still green and tender. The wheat ripens around Pentecost, roughly two months later. It was also planted the fall before, but it grows slower than barley – but when it's finished, they are nearly indistinguishable. Then the third harvest season is in the fall, a bit before Tabernacles. These crops are either perennial (grapes, fruits, etc.), or were planted around Pentecost (late May) – things like melons, corn, squash, and so on.

Knowing the plan of God as you've studied it in these lessons, if you take the time to think those two paragraphs through, you'll understand a lot about the plan of God without reading any more. At the end of the lesson I will wrap up that metaphor and show you what it means, but take the time now to think about it yourself before you read more – remember, this is not just about studying. It's about learning to learn, understanding how to understand.

SHOUTING FOR JOY

Last lesson we studied the spring Feasts, concluding with Pentecost. So now we will pick up where we left off with the first of the fall Feasts, the Feast of Shouting. This is erroneously called the Feast of Trumpets in most Bibles, but God never inspired the use of that word. I myself grew up calling it the Feast of Trumpets, and it has been difficult to break the habit.

It is mentioned directly in only two places in the Bible, first in **Leviticus 23:24** where YLT calls it "*a Sabbath, a memorial of shouting*", and then in **Numbers 29:1**, where YLT says on that day "*ye do no servile work; a day of shouting it is to you*". The word translated "shouting" is the Hebrew *teruwah*. Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (which will be called simply "Strong's" in future references) says the word means a "clamor, i.e. acclamation of joy or a battle-cry".

So which is it – a day of shouting for joy, or shouting in anger or in battle? We can't just guess. So we go to the one place in the Bible where we have a record of how this day was observed. After the captivity of the Jews in 585 BC, they returned to Palestine from Babylon and rebuilt the temple.

There they rediscovered the true religion which they had lost or corrupted in captivity. In addition to this being the only record of this Feast being kept, it is also the only detailed record of a church service anywhere in the Bible. Now read **Nehemiah 8:1-3**. Several useful facts are contained there.

Everyone attended who “could hear with understanding” – i.e., everyone except perhaps the very young or the very old or the mentally incompetent. The service lasted from morning until midday – so perhaps from 9 to 12. And this service was on the first day of the seventh month – which is the day of the Feast of Shouting. The law was read and explained and made clear (**verse 8**), as part of the “holy convocation” (church service) commanded on that day.

It’s important to understand the mood of these people; they knew they had sinned horribly and had brought untold grief upon themselves. They were bitterly ashamed of themselves, and rightly so. They were poor, oppressed, had just been brought back to their once-glorious home which was in ruins. Now read **verse 9**.

So when they heard the law, and realized their sins, they wept; but Nehemiah and Ezra stopped them! Why? **Verses 10-11**. So what did the people do? **Verse 12**. This was a day of feasting, of joy, of mirth. So the shouting was shouting for joy, not shouting as in battle! See **Ezra 3:12-13** for two more examples of *teruwah* (shouting) used in this way.

But now let’s focus on the other word used; Leviticus calls this day a MEMORIAL of (joyous) shouting. But this is the first time this Hebrew word *teruwah* is used in the Bible! So how can it be a “memorial of *teruwah*” when it’s the first time it is mentioned? Well... it IS the first time it is mentioned in the Bible, in terms of chapter and verse. It is not however, the first *chronological* reference to shouting for joy in the Bible! That is in **Job 38:4-7**. There God describes the time when He made the Earth; and what happened when He finished? The angels SHOUTED FOR JOY!

God’s days commemorate important events, just as most of man’s holidays do. The creation of the universe was significant. It was a time of joy, of beauty, of optimistic looking forward to the plan of God now set in motion. There was no sin, nothing to mourn, nothing but wonder and happiness and looking forward to new members of the family of God – you and me. And remembering that feeling of celebration is why we are specifically forbidden from being depressed on this FEAST day. It’s a time to eat, drink, and be merry. To put it bluntly, the Feast of Shouting commemorates the universe’s birthday.

ATONEMENT

Atonement is the exact opposite of the Feast of Shouting. It is a day to be afflicted, to mourn, to deprive yourself of food and water and entertainment. You read in the last lesson that Atonement commemorates a day when something terrible happened. It is the only day of its kind in the year.

The word translated as atonement is *kaphar*. It literally means “to cover”. Figuratively, it means to cover up sins, to hide them, cleanse them, forgive them, and so on. Now remembering why God makes a day holy – on that day, something important happened – what would you guess off the top of your head that Atonement represents?

To put it a different way, if atonement means “to cleanse sin”, when is the FIRST time God would have to cleanse sin? Why, on the FIRST day *it was committed!* Thus, a commemoration of cleansing sin would also be a commemoration of the first sin! Not the sin of Adam – but the REAL first sin. Who is the father of lying (a sin)? **John 8:44**. Who committed the first sin? **1 John 3:8**.

But to prove that idea, and to understand it more fully, we need to study how Atonement was observed and what took place on that day. Start by reading **Leviticus 16:29-34**. Every year on the tenth day of the seventh month, the high priest entered into the innermost room of the temple. He was allowed to

enter there only once a year, on Atonement. The ritual he performed on that day is described in the first part of **Leviticus 16**.

The priest does several sacrifices on this day, all of which are significant, but you'll understand those another day. Today we focus on the two goats described in **verses 5-10**. Notice these two goats are for a sin offering – to take away the sins of Israel. In **verse 8** the priest casts lots – something like flipping a coin, a way for God to show Israel His choice in matters – to divide the goats. One will be for the Lord, and one will be a “scapegoat”.

The goat which God chooses is sacrificed to pay for the sins of the people, and the other goat is led off alive into the wilderness (**verses 9-10**). **Verses 15-17** pick up the story of the Lord's goat, which is sacrificed to PAY for the sins of the people. Who pays for our sins? **Colossians 1:14, 1 Corinthians 6:20**, etc. So this sacrificed goat can only represent Jesus, making atonement for our sins – covering them – with His blood.

Leviticus 16:20 picks up the story of the scapegoat, after the sacrifices have all been made, and the payment of Jesus' blood is symbolically made. Now read carefully what the high priest does to this other goat in **verses 21-22**. Notice that the sins are PLACED ON the goat. CONFESSED ON HIM. PUT ON HIS HEAD.

The Lord's goat paid the PRICE for your sins, as your savior. But this second goat bears part of the RESPONSIBILITY for your sins, as the one ultimately to *BLAME* for your sins ***BECAUSE HE WAS THE FIRST SINNER and helped mankind learn how to sin!*** (**Genesis 3**).

Even the most wicked among us have been deceived by the devil (**Revelation 12:9**). On some level, we all have the same excuse Eve used when God asked her to give account for her sins in **Genesis 3:13**. And so God can forgive us – and punish the devil instead (**Genesis 3:14**) – for his part in our sins. That is what the scapegoat in **Leviticus 16** represents.

But on the other hand, not even the most foolish among us are *completely* deceived. We all bear some portion of the blame for our actions. The more truth we understand, the more blame we bear when we rebel against it. The law requires you die for those sins (**Romans 6:23**). But Jesus voluntarily came and died in your place, so when you stopped sinning and repented, His blood could make an atonement for you. And it is these two parts of the atonement that are necessary for your forgiveness, and both are pictured in **Leviticus 16**.

You may be wondering why it was necessary to cast lots over the goats, to choose which one is the Lord's goat and which represents the Devil. Simply because there are two Jesuses in the world today. One is the true Jesus, and one – by far the most popular one – is the false Jesus. If it were left up to popular vote to pick the true Jesus from the false, ***man would choose the false Jesus every time! And that's exactly what Man has done, in nearly every church on Earth!***

Satan is the master deceiver, and he will tell you whatever it takes for you to choose him. It is only by using the BIBLE that you can pick out the true Jesus from the false! GOD can show you the difference between them, and that is why GOD chose for Israel by having them cast lots each year! Only God, and His word, can help you see through those lies.

THE REBELLION

Most of **Ezekiel 28** speaks of Satan and his righteous beginnings and sinful present and dismal future. An entire lesson will be devoted to that in the future, but for now we are interested in **Ezekiel 28:15-16**. Satan was PERFECT in all his ways. He wasn't made evil. He was made righteous. But then iniquity (lawlessness) was found in him. He sinned. And so he was cast out of heaven. Was the Being who became Jesus present for this event? **Luke 10:18**. Is there a record of this event in the Bible? **Revelation 12:7-9**.

When Satan led that rebellion into heaven, from that day forward Jesus and Satan, who had up until then worked together closely, had to part ways. Jesus stayed in heaven with His Father, and Satan was cast to Earth – a wilderness that was, at that time, uninhabited (**Leviticus 16:22**).

There was a DAY that iniquity was found in the angel we now call the devil. Not a gradual change, but a SPECIFIC DAY that God recalls (**Ezekiel 28:15**). It was on that DAY that sin entered the universe for the first time, and for the first time there was a need for an atonement – a covering – for that sin. This is why Atonement is the saddest day of the year. Because all the unhappiness, sadness, suffering, and death in history happened because of the chain of events started on that day by the sin of Satan.

When people lose their loved ones they often lose their appetite for days or weeks. If we truly understood the depth and scope of the results of sin that has taken place since this day, we would as well. It was a dark day for the universe. The birthday of sin.

TABERNACLES

But with Tabernacles the mood lifts, for now we speak of the harvest and all the good food and feasting God has blessed us with. Read **Deuteronomy 16:13-15**. This is a week-long celebration! The year's work is done (agriculturally speaking). The harvest is in, and this is where you and your family get together with other people of like mind to share your harvest with each other. At least, that was the physical meaning of it.

The captives returning from Babylon were in a similar situation to yours. They had thought they were serving God all these years but then they found God was quite different from what they'd been told. So they had to start from the ground up and learn what the Book really said for themselves. Read **Nehemiah 8:14-15**. So what did the people do? **Verses 16-17**.

If you're using an older translation, the word "booths" and "tabernacles" are both old English words meaning simply "tents", or by extension, temporary dwellings. The command God gave was to dwell in tents for seven days; and since work was forbidden on the 8th day, that meant they automatically had to stay in tents that day as well.

FOT begins the 15th day of the seventh month, and ends the 21st day. Then the 22nd is the Last Great Day (LGD), a Holy Day, which we will discuss in a moment. So the first day and the 8th day, were holy and no work was to be done. On the days in between physical labor was allowed. And when did Israel go home from Tabernacles? **2 Chronicles 7:8-10**.

Now read **Leviticus 23:39-43**. This feast is also a memorial of Egypt, and as such can never be fulfilled. And we know for a fact this feast will be kept after the return of Christ; read **Zechariah 14:16-19**. Notice that observance of this feast will not be optional, not even for Gentiles. Not even for Gentiles who are opposed to God's ways; they will all keep Tabernacles, or they will be cursed.

In Leviticus God specifically gives us the meaning for this day; and so each year we leave our homes behind and remember how Israel also had no home when they came out of Egypt. And that helps to remind us that a home, a “certain dwelling-place” (**1 Corinthians 4:11**), is not something we can count on in this life, and frankly not something we need (**Hebrews 11:13-16, Matthew 8:20**). And if we are blessed enough to have a home and a stable life to go with it, Tabernacles will make us appreciate it more when we return to it.

But while ULB commemorates the Exodus and the time up to the crossing of the Red Sea, FOT commemorates the time they spent wandering in the wilderness afterwards. Notice how God phrases it: “*That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths*”; God MADE the Israelites dwell in booths. When did God do this? **Numbers 9:18-23**. So for 40 years after the Exodus, God made Israel live in tents.

The promised land was only a few hundred miles from Egypt. They could have been there in a few months, even on foot. Then they could have been living in houses, and left behind their tents. But God didn’t let them. Why? **Deuteronomy 1:21-40**. That passage tells us how Israel spied out the promised land and liked it, but were afraid of the giants who lived in the land so they refused to enter it. They didn’t trust God, and lacked the faith to inherit the promises. How did God feel about those people? **Psalms 95:7-11**.

Tabernacles pictures the wandering in the wilderness of the faithless Israelites. It’s about the time when, instead of entering the promised land, Israel was locked out because of their unbelief. But why, then, is it a time of celebration? *Because Tabernacles tells us about the future of those faithless, lost, homeless Israelites!* Their story isn’t finished yet!

In Lesson 7 you read in **Ezekiel 37** about the valley of dry bones, which represented the “whole house of Israel”, who died unsaved (**verse 11**). You saw there will come a time when those who are lost in this life will be resurrected to a new life, in a better time, and taught the evils of sin by the spirits of just men made perfect – the members of the first resurrection, working directly under God, Himself!

Unleavened Bread is about the first-fruits, the firstborn, the first harvest – the first resurrection. But Tabernacles is about the *second-fruits*, the *second* harvest, the *second* resurrection! And it’s a joyous time to celebrate because it’s about the salvation of THE REST OF MANKIND! The vastly greater portion of humanity, those who died unsaved in this life!

THE DUALITY

But we’ll come back to that later, because Tabernacles has a dual meaning. The Bible tells us it pictures the time of the wandering in Egypt; I just said it represented the faithless, but that isn’t quite true because *not all of the Israelites who wandered were faithless!* Read **Numbers 32:11-13**.

There were 600,000 men able to go to war (in addition to their wives, and their children, and the elderly) who left Egypt with Moses (**Exodus 12:37**). Probably a total of about two million people. And of those two million people who left Egypt... only TWO men entered the promised land. Everyone else who was of responsible age (over twenty) died in the wilderness.

Only Caleb and Joshua were faithful. They trusted God, and they alone qualified to enter the promised land out of all those millions of people. In theory, they could have entered it *right then!* But they STILL wandered in the wilderness for another 40 years before the rest of the faithless died off, and entered the promised land with the new generation.

And the Feast of Tabernacles celebrates BOTH groups; not only the hopeful future of the faithless, *but the present of the faithful!*

Was John the Baptist in the wilderness? **John 1:23**. Are God's flock in a wilderness today? **Luke 15:4**. Is the true church pictured as being in the wilderness? **Revelation 12:6, 14**.

We, the faithful today, are in a wilderness. We are surrounded on all sides by a desert, a land devoid of truth; a famine of the hearing of the word of the Lord (**Amos 8:11**). Everywhere you look are lies, deceptions, evil of every form. The world has turned its back on God at every level. It has rejected every sort of faith in Him, preferring instead to worship a false Jesus and observe false feast days and false commandments. And they, like faithless Israel, will not enter into God's rest – the first resurrection.

And yet, like those in the original wilderness who rejected God, God has not struck them down with lightning for their sins. The preacher still preaches lies on the corner without being eaten by worms, and the millions flock to church on Sunday to serve the mark of the beast. God has permitted most of the world to live their lives in this wilderness, and only after death to learn of the truth in the second resurrection.

But we who have accepted God, repented of the sins of our earlier life and have professed faith in Christ are still in this same wilderness with the rest of them. The moment you repent of your sins, you aren't whisked off to heaven nor made immortal *because you still have to take your journey with the rest of Israel!*

What does Paul call our present, physical body? **2 Corinthians 5:1-4**. Did Peter say that when he "put off" his tabernacle, he would be dead? **2 Peter 1:13-15**. Did John call Jesus' human body a tabernacle (tent)? **John 1:14** [Note: be sure to read this verse in the YLT, Murdoch, or Rotherham versions; most Bibles don't translate it literally.]

We, today, dwell in a TABERNACLE! A temporary, physical TENT is all this flesh is, a place for your soul to live until God deems you worthy of a HOUSE, a permanent body that cannot die! (**2 Corinthians 5:1**). And this Holy Day season will remind us, throughout eternity, of the time when we dwelt in these flimsy, physical shells of a body that are subject to decay and weakness.

It will remind us of the time when, surrounded by a wilderness full of faithless people, we wandered the world poor and despised, when we... well, basically just read **Hebrews 11:33-40**. That's what Tabernacles is about. It's about living in temporary dwellings, about the time both the first and second resurrection people spent in a world managed by the devil, which he has successfully turned into a wilderness.

It's about the time before the Kingdom of God comes to this Earth, and it looks forward to the joy we will experience when it does arrive and when the fall harvest, the GREAT harvest of all mankind starts to come in.

LAST GREAT DAY

There is little said about the Last Great Day (LGD), which is ironic, since it is the most important Holy Day of all in some ways. Most of our understanding of this day comes from the sermon Jesus gave on this Holy Day in **John 7:37-39**.

Now here God specifically interprets this for us. You may have noticed God never leaves things to chance. If we need to understand a prophecy or a symbol, He ALWAYS leaves the clues we need to understand it. That's not to say we don't ever have to think a bit to put the pieces together, but the Bible ALWAYS interprets the Bible!

John tells us this sermon, given on the Last Great Day, the 8th day from the beginning of Tabernacles, was about the giving of the holy spirit. Now if you think about that, it's pretty strange. The holy spirit was given on Pentecost, not on the LGD. Why would Jesus get up on one Holy Day and give a promise that was to be fulfilled on a *different* Holy Day? He wouldn't. The promise He made on this day was to be fulfilled on this day. To explain that, I have to digress a bit.

Can just anyone come to Christ? **John 6:44, 65**. Do ministers add people to the church? **Acts 2:47**. Can ordinary people understand anything about God without God's help? **1 Corinthians 2:14**. Could most of Israel understand the things Jesus said? **Matthew 13:10-17**.

People who are thirsty CANNOT COME TO CHRIST today, unless God SPECIFICALLY calls them to Him. That may be a shocking statement, but that's what you just read in **John 6**. It is IMPOSSIBLE to find God unless He wants you to find Him.

Jesus' promise in **John 7**, was "if ANY man thirst, let him come to me, and drink", which John tells us referred to the spirit that He would give to man. **So the promise Jesus made was that if ANY man wants the spirit of God, he can come to Jesus and get it... but that is not true today! That promise has not yet been fulfilled!**

Is there is a time coming when ALL shall know God? **Jeremiah 31:34**. And how will that happen? **Verse 33**. And how will God do that? **2 Corinthians 3:3**.

You and I have been invited into the NEW covenant, and given a chance today to have the laws of God written on our hearts by His spirit. But there is a time coming in the future when God will offer that covenant to ALL MANKIND! A time when ALL that are in the graves will HEAR His voice (**John 5:28**). A time when EVERYONE is given a chance at salvation!

Jesus gave us that message on the Last Great Day because *that's when this prophecy will come true!* The Feast of Tabernacles gives us hope for the future of the unsaved, but the Last Great Day FULFILLS that hope, it is the RECEIVING of the promise that ALL who will, can come to Jesus and receive the rivers of living water, the spirit of God!

And that's why I said this is perhaps the most important Holy Day of all. Each day pictures a vital part in God's plan; without the universe, there would be no life at all; without sin, we'd never have known first-hand how horrible it was and could never have committed to avoid it with all our heart.

Without the Passover and Atonement, we couldn't be forgiven for the sins we already committed; without Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles there could be no understanding of the plan of God, the journey away from sin or truly grasping why we wander in this wilderness today. But without the Last Great Day, the whole thing would be pretty meaningless. Why?

Is the way to salvation a narrow, slippery road? **Matthew 7:13-14**. Is God's true church a "little flock"? **Luke 12:32**. Will the world respect and admire it? **John 15:18-19**. Will the true Christian be unwelcome in churches and killed by people who believe they worship God? **John 16:2**. Will many be saved in this time? **Luke 13:23-24**.

The first resurrection is a small group. They are just the *leadership* for the world to come. To use the harvest analogy, it is like picking a basket of the very best peaches from the tree; the prettiest, juiciest ones to take to the county fair. But suppose you stopped then, and just left the rest of the fruit on the tree to rot.

You'd have put all year into planting, pruning, fertilizing and watering this crop; all the work would still be invested. And granted, you would have a basket of the very best peaches around, *but that would be a pretty small reward if that was all you ever got!* Because by far the vast majority of your "cash crop" is still on the trees!

It is on this day, this Last, GREAT Day, that the tremendous harvest of all mankind will be brought into the barn! Today, God has picked the one-in-a-million, the Calebs and the Joshuas, to be the incorruptible leaders of His kingdom. But on this day they will help Him to harvest BILLIONS of souls and make them ALL a part of the Family of God!

On this day the younger brothers and sisters begin to be harvested, when Satan is bound and those who *claim* to speak for God *actually* speak for God and the truth is made available to everyone, then ALL who will humble themselves before the His Word and His spirit, will receive adoption into His Family, the same family that's being offered to you and me today!

And that's why I said it is the most important of the Holy Days, **because the salvation of mankind is the underlying PURPOSE behind God's entire plan!**

The church today will be the best of the best, the crème de la crème, but God does not want ANYONE to perish (**2 Peter 3:9**), and will make every effort to save all He can of the roughly 70 billion people who have been born since Adam, not to mention the offspring they will have in that world to come!

So it is on THIS day the TRUE harvest comes in!

PILGRIMAGE

Up until this point, I have ignored one of the biggest aspects of observing these feasts. God said in **Deuteronomy 16:16** that all males were required to appear before God three times a year (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), and they were all to appear together "*in the place which He shall choose to place His name*".

This was not an optional observance. Every year all males in Israel HAD to travel to Jerusalem, which was where God had chosen to place His temple and His priests, and there they learned about the law and brought their offerings and tithes, following the command, "*they shalt not appear before the Lord empty*".

Today, there is no temple; but there is still a priesthood of God, although in more modern language they are called ministers today. And the true Church of God wherever they are and however small the group, travels for the three seasons commanded by God.

Jesus' parents set us a perfect example in **Luke 2:41-43**. Notice they didn't just go up for the Passover, or for a weekend, but they "fulfilled the days", and THEN they returned home; they kept ALL the Days of Unleavened Bread at the place God had placed His priesthood – Jerusalem.

In the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it is only the first and seventh days that are holy; that is, on them no work may be done. With Tabernacles, only the first and eighth days are holy – the first day of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day.

But while work is permitted on the days in between, the time is clearly to be about God and studying the law of God, and gathering with others who do the same. God said in **Deuteronomy 16:13-16** and elsewhere that you are to celebrate the Feast “SEVEN days”, not just the first and last day, because all seven days are part of the Feast of God; so the “work” should be in the manner of preparing food, moving chairs for services, or shopping for provisions, not working at your regular job.

The Biblical example is clearly to have church services *every day of the feast*. Read **Nehemiah 8:18**, which plainly says this. “*Day by day*” – every day – they listened to Ezra the priest read to them out of the law. The rest of the day was spent celebrating, feasting, enjoying the harvest, having fun and talking about the Bible.

Another example is in **2 Chronicles 30:21**. Again we see the clear example that ALL Israel gathered at one place and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days “with great gladness”, and they had services “day by day”. This isn’t some awful chore God demands for His own selfish benefit, this is a FUN time, for OUR enjoyment!

This is a time to get together with the few people on this Earth who believe like you do; the few people on Earth who have been called by God and understand we are not part of this world. A time to learn things about God you simply don’t have any way to learn the rest of the year. **A time to celebrate the blessings God has given you!**

Deuteronomy 16, starting in **verse 1**, tells us to sacrifice our Passover “*in the PLACE* [in a SINGLE place!] *which the LORD shall choose to place his name there*” (**verse 2**). It goes on to say following that, for “*seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith*” (**verse 3**).

So we eat our Passover AND unleavened bread after journeying to the place where God “placed His name”. Then God explains why He commanded us to make this journey each year: “*that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life*” (**verse 3**).

But now God makes it clear that you are forbidden to keep the Passover at home: “*Thou mayest NOT sacrifice the passover within ANY of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*” (**verse 5**). Throughout the Bible it uses the term “your gates” to represent property or cities which belong to you, or which you control (**Exodus 20:10** for instance). So God said you MUST leave those gates to take the Passover, therefore not to do so *is a SIN!* So where should we keep the Passover? **Verses 6-7**.

But did God mean this ONLY for the Passover, or for all the Days of Unleavened Bread? Well, what was the rest of His command? “... *and thou shalt turn in the morning, [the daylight portion of Passover, before the Night To Be Much Observed] and GO UNTO THY TENTS.*”

So you see, Israel WAS commanded to be dwelling in tents during Unleavened Bread! They were not commanded to “leave the church building, and go back home to watch TV”! They were commanded to return to their tents BECAUSE THEY HAD TRAVELED TO GET TO THE PLACE GOD HAD PUT HIS NAME! Three times in a year!

God knows this is inconvenient. He knows with us gone, thieves could come and rob us, we might lose our jobs, and so obeying this job requires FAITH in God. Not merely that baby faith of “oh yes, I

believe there's a God", but **REAL faith that YES, God is REAL and He will REALLY protect you and yours! Because HE PROMISED TO DO SO!** Read His explicit promise for this exact situation in **Exodus 34:24!**

See, Israel was worried about their possessions because three times a year **THEY WEREN'T WITH THEM** because they had **TRAVELED** to be where God placed His name! Because keeping these Feasts at home is **IMPOSSIBLE**. That's right, I said impossible.

Sure, you can take the day off of work and maybe do a bit of extra study, but *that wasn't the command God gave!* God said you had to dwell in **TENTS** for Tabernacles and Unleavened Bread; you can't do that at home. God said *three times* a year, **EVERY YEAR**, you had to be gathered together in a **PLACE** – a certain, specific place – where God had placed His name.

In a place where His authority is exercised, where His ministers teach the Truth, where you can focus your attention on learning more about Him from others like you. The exact location for the feasts, since the destruction of the temple, is chosen each year by those God has put in authority over His church.

It's pointless to do what God says on one thing, and disobey Him on another (**James 2:10-11**). Why bother not stealing if you're going to disobey God about keeping the Holy Days, or the manner in which He said to keep them?

Some who study this will think traveling three times a year is too much for God to ask. But it is not too much, and you'll be amply rewarded if you trust God. If you don't, you'll fall by the wayside with others who just couldn't quite do what God commanded. It's that simple.

The Feasts are something to look forward to, an entire week twice a year and a weekend at Pentecost during which you can talk in person to those who love God as you do. A time to stay up late, exploring the mysteries of God and understanding the meaning of life, while eating good food and enjoying good company. And so to those who happily, gladly accept this truth, I look forward to meeting you at some future Feast.

WHO MUST TRAVEL?

The command is specifically given to Israelite males: **Deuteronomy 16:16**. However, the example given is usually of the entire family traveling to Jerusalem together: **Luke 2:41-43**. There were large groups of relatives who all traveled together: **verse 44**. On the other hand, pregnant women and young children sometimes did not go to the Feast: **1 Samuel 1:21-23**.

But in the New Testament, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (**Galatians 3:28**). So are women required to go or not?

The answer is simple. God said you cannot eat the Passover within your gates (**Deuteronomy 16:5**). Therefore you must travel to eat it. Jesus said anyone who didn't eat His flesh and drink His blood could not receive eternal life (**John 6:53-54**). He later showed these symbols were the new Passover service (**Matthew 26:26-28**).

Therefore anyone, man or woman, who doesn't eat the body and drink the blood of Christ at the Passover is not a Christian. You cannot eat the Passover without traveling. Therefore, all baptized men and women must travel to the Feasts.

But why were women exempted from travel in the Old Testament? The question comes down to one of promises. The old covenant commands came with Old Testament promises. Those promises were made to, and inherited by, men. Therefore, there was no reason for women to travel to eat the Passover which was part of the symbolism of a covenant that was not made with them.

Women were not circumcised; they had no physical sign of commitment to any covenant with God. Until marriage their access to the covenant was through their father, and after marriage their access was through their husband (see **1 Corinthians 14:35**). They had a physical sign of their covenant with their husband, similar to our wedding rings today, and that gave them access to the blessings of God. This is how the Old Covenant was set up.

However in the New Covenant there are new promises, made to both men and women. Baptism has now replaced circumcision as the symbol of the covenant you make with God (that's another lesson), and now men and women can both have access to God directly (**2 Corinthians 6:18**). Both can take the symbol of the Covenant (baptism), and therefore both have access to the blood and body of Christ (the Passover). Because now men and women, husband and wife, are heirs *TOGETHER* of the grace of life (**1 Peter 3:7**).

The word "heirs" there is important, because that is what we are. Heirs of life. And the Passover service is the last will and testament of Jesus Christ (**Hebrews 9:15-17**). Online Bible Greek Lexicon says this Greek word translated as *testament* means "the last disposition which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will".

That is what the New Testament means; it is a new will, promising a new inheritance for us. An eternal inheritance. The Passover service is in effect the reading of that will. And should not the heirs of Christ be present at the reading of His will – wherever it is read?

BUT HOW CAN I PAY FOR THIS?

God has provided for that too, which you will learn about in the next lesson. If you truly trust God, you know He has provided a way for you to obey His commandments (**1 Corinthians 10:13**). And if you trust Him, a way will always be there for you to travel to the Feasts as He commanded.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

God has two harvests; the first resurrection and the second resurrection. The first resurrection is often, and exclusively, referred to as the firstfruits or the firstborn. For example...

What did God call Israel? **Exodus 4:22-23**. The first resurrection people saved when Jesus returns are called what? **Revelation 14:4**. What are we to become? **James 1:18**. What is the church called? **Hebrews 12:23**. What fruit is used to represent resurrected saints in the first resurrection? **1 Corinthians 15:35-38**. What did Jesus use as a metaphor for the first resurrection? **John 12:24**. What did Jesus compare Simon Peter to? **Luke 22:31**. And the harvest at the end of this age (at the first resurrection) is compared to what sort of harvest? **Matthew 13:30**.

Over and over throughout the Bible God speaks of the saints saved in this time as the firstborn, the firstfruits, and regularly uses wheat to represent the first resurrection saints, and NEVER to represent the second resurrection. Now look at a few specific Holy Days and see to whom they apply:

Who would be killed if they didn't observe the Passover? **Exodus 12:12**. Would the second-born be harmed at all? (Same verse). The next day, the first day of Unleavened Bread, what did God command? **Exodus 13:2-3**. Why did God command the Feast of Unleavened Bread to be observed? **Verses 5-8**. And why are the firstborn set apart? **Verses 12-15**.

Notice how intricately Passover and ULB are connected with the firstborn. Only the firstborn had anything to fear from the death angel in Egypt. The firstborn was set aside to commemorate the Exodus of the firstborn from Egypt; Israel was collectively considered God's firstborn. Spiritual Israel (the church) is called the firstborn in the New Testament, James says we are each a type of firstfruits to God, and after the resurrection we will be the firstfruits to God.

When you add that to the fact these holy days are set in the time of the spring grain harvest, and that God repeatedly compares the saints to wheat or other grains, the conclusion is inescapable that the spring feasts are about the first resurrection. Was the wavesheaf day (during ULB) about the firstfruits? **Leviticus 23:9-10**. And is Pentecost (remember, the OT name is "the feast of weeks") about the firstfruits? **Exodus 34:22**.

The spring feasts are about the first batch of saints; the tougher crop that survived the harsh winter, cold weather; the barley that fought its way up through the snow to produce the first of the firstfruits, the first successful crop in the harvest. For who that is, simply read **Colossians 1:18**, **Revelation 1:5**, **Romans 8:29**. Jesus died on the daylight portion of Passover. He was buried at the very end of the day, just as the Feast of Unleavened Bread began.

He laid in the ground for three days and three nights (**Matthew 12:40**; also request the free booklet "The Resurrection Was Not On Sunday!"), and was resurrected just at sundown Saturday evening. Sunday morning Jesus ascended to His Father (Add **John 20:17** to **Matthew 28:18**).

The reason I mention this is that the Sunday morning during Unleavened Bread was the Wavesheaf day (**Leviticus 23:10-15**). That day the barley, first of the year's harvest, was offered before God to see if He accepted it. On that very day, Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, ascended up before God to receive "all power in heaven and in Earth". So the barley represented the first of the firstborn, Jesus.

Next comes the wheat, the second hardy crop to survive the long winter. It represents the remainder of the firstfruits, which are offered to the Father at Pentecost, remember. This crop had a slightly easier time of it, ripening later than the barley, but it still had to survive the same cold, harsh winter. But wheat has been found in Pyramids that is 4,000 years old and still sprouts! And the firstborn sons of God will be raised "incorruptible" (**1 Peter 1:23**), incapable of sin! (**1 John 3:9**).

So that's the spring Feasts; they all revolve around the firstfruits. But the other side of that metaphor is that the fall Feasts correspond to the second resurrection. The spring crops are hardier, last longer, and are more nutritious per pound – but the fall crop has an infinitely greater variety of fruits.

And the fall harvest produces a far greater abundance, and its fruits are much sweeter; which is because they grew in an easier time, with warm weather, gentler rains, more sunshine. But without special preparation, none of those fruits would survive the winter! They are not stable like grain, which can be dumped in a silo or thrown in a pail in the cellar and still be ready to eat in 10 years.

Tomatoes, apricots, grapes and the like *can* be preserved but only with direct intervention! They must be carefully dried in the sun, canned, salted, or fermented with the right yeasts or they won't last a

month off the vine! Wheat needs no special preparation, harvest it today and plant it next month or in ten thousand years, and it will still be alive!

The second resurrection will be much larger; much greater variety; much more flavor and joy in their harvest. But unlike the first resurrection, they did not survive the winter; they will never have the resistance to sin that we have. They will never be incorruptibly righteous on the level that we can be, if we survive our trip through this wilderness in which we live today; we, who have who lived in this spiritual winter caused by Satan's deception.

These Holy Days spell out the plan of God, in considerably greater detail than I have shown here. As you keep them and study them, you will be amazed at the depth contained in these simple commands. They are as I said in the beginning one of the most pleasant commands God has given us; in effect, three paid vacations a year. (The "paid" part you will learn in the next lesson.)

Without keeping these days, you will miss the greatest single opportunity you will have in this life to learn about God.

Without keeping these days, you cannot understand prophecy.

Without keeping these days, you are not a Christian.

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold;** "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

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