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17. The Lord's Appointed Times (Leviticus 23)

Introduction¹²¹

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘The Lord’s appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these:’” ([Leviticus 23:2](#)).

The Lord’s appointed times are festivals and holy days that commemorate significant times and events in Israel’s history. I had the unique privilege of attending Beth Hallel, a Messianic Jewish congregation, from 1988 through 1994. During these six years I joined with my Messianic Jewish friends in celebrating these holidays. They were a rich experience. In the fall of 1992, I was teaching through the Book of Revelation. As I heard the shofars blowing in the synagogue, I began thinking of the seven trumpet judgments. I asked myself what the association might be between these shofars and the trumpets in Revelation. This paper, in part, is what I discovered.

How do you learn best? Do you prefer to hear a lecture or read a book? Do you get more out of a documentary movie or studying the printed page? Can you learn about something abstractly, or do you need hands-on experience? As with many other things, the Lord has given each of us different learning styles. Therefore, it should not surprise us that the Lord communicates His truth in diverse ways. This is, at its core, what [Leviticus 23](#) and related scriptures have to tell us. We not only have His written word, but we have commemorative

holy days to transmit truth to the young and the old, the literate and the illiterate alike. The holy days tell and show the great truths of God's salvation, His love, and His plans. They contain things to hear, see, taste, build, and do, and they appeal to everybody. They are "holy days," but that really means that they are holidays.

The celebrations are fun, mostly, but they also teach us about eternal things. From a New Testament perspective, these holidays take on a meaning much richer than the Old Testament saints could have dreamed of. As Paul wrote to the Colossian church:

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ ([Colossians 2:16-17](#)).

These holidays look back, in time, to miracles that God performed for the world and for the Israelites. They also look forward, in time, to the work of Jesus Christ. Occurring during the spring and fall harvests, they speak of God's continuous provisions. Together they promise God's eternal care for His people.

This paper tells the story of these events on three levels. The first level discusses how the holidays have been celebrated through the centuries. The second level discusses the sensory elements and how they teach the truth in non-verbal ways. The third level discusses how Jesus Christ fulfilled or will fulfill the substance of each celebration.

The Jewish Calendar

Having invited you to the fun, I must ask you to pause to consider the calendar through which these celebrations flow. This is because the *Jewish Calendar* is very different from ours. There is no January or February to be found. Instead, the Bible refers to "the first month," "the seventh month," or names like Abib and Ethanim. There is no quick way to say that, for a particular year, the 15th of Abib occurs on the 6th of April. Also, most of you know that October is in the fall, but do you know what season Ethanim occupies? Do you know that the Bible has another name for the month of Abib? I hope that you find this section useful for this and other studies that you do.

As I have already stated, the Lord's "appointed times" occur through the year. The Jews, because they celebrate them every year, can and do anticipate each one in its season. They are a part of their culture. A Jew knows that the Feast of Tabernacles occurs in the fall as readily as we know that Easter occurs in the spring. The placement of these festivals through the year has prophetic significance. To be specific, Jesus' death and resurrection

are the substance of the spring holidays. His return and the establishment of His kingdom are the substance of the fall holidays. In between, there is the summer season of church history.

Our calendar, known officially as the Gregorian Calendar, is based on the relative motion of the sun through the heavens. For this reason, it is sometimes called a solar calendar. It takes 365.2524 days to complete the year. To keep the start of spring from shifting into February and then January, we insert a leap day every four years. This keeps the calendar and the seasons together. Consequently, the vernal and autumnal equinoxes always occur in March and September respectively.¹²²

The Jewish Calendar, however, is based on the relative motion of both the moon and the sun. It is, therefore, called a luni-solar calendar. Since it is based on the moon, the first of every month coincides with a new moon and the fifteenth of every month coincides with a full moon. In other words, each month is defined by the phases of the moon. The Jewish Calendar keeps the months and their respective seasons together by the insertion of leap months. This means that most years have twelve months, but some have thirteen. The whole system has a nineteen-year cycle. It is more accurate than our solar calendar, but it's more difficult to follow. The Jewish calendar does not mark the first day of spring, summer, fall, or winter. The primary markers in the Jewish Calendar are the holidays.

The modern Jewish Calendar has its secular and religious forms. The secular calendar begins with the month of Ethanim. The religious calendar begins with the month of Abib. The Bible consistently uses the religious form; i.e., the first month is always Abib. Ethanim and Abib are ancient Canaanite names for the first and seventh months respectively. However, beginning with the Babylonian exile, the Jews began using the Babylonian names for the months. Consequently, the post-exilic Biblical authors, Nehemiah and the author of Esther, used the Babylonian names. Today's Jewish Calendar also uses the Babylonian names.

The following table presents these essential ideas:

Religious Month	Canaanite Name	Babylonian Name	Gregorian Placement	Leviticus 23 Holiday
First	Abib	Nisan	March or April	Passover; Feast of Unleavened

				Bread; Wave Offering of First Fruits
Second	Ziv	Iyyar	April or May	
Third		Sivan ¹²³	May or June	Pentecost
Fourth		Tammuz	June or July	
Fifth		Ab	July or August	
Sixth		Elul	August or September	
Seventh	Ethanim	Tishri	September or October	Trumpets; Day of Atonement; Feast of Tabernacles
Eighth	Bul	Cheshvan	October or November	
Ninth		Chislev	November or December	
Tenth		Tebeth	December or January	

Eleventh	Shebat	January or February	
Twelfth	Adar	February or March	
Thirteenth	Adar II	March	This is the leap month

Although these technical details may sound dry, they have important implications in certain passages of scripture. For example, Passover begins on the fourteenth day of the month of Abib. Since the months, in the Jewish Calendar, follow the phases of the moon, we know that this must be a full moon. The darkness that fell over the earth when Jesus was crucified could not, therefore, have been an eclipse of the sun. It had to be, therefore, of supernatural origin.

The important thing for us to note for this study of [Leviticus 23](#) is that the first month, Abib, occurs sometime during March or April and the seventh month, Ethanim, occurs sometime during September or October. To get back to the study at hand, [Leviticus 23](#) tells us first about a weekly celebration, the Sabbath. It then describes several spring celebrations (Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Wave Offering of First Fruits, and Pentecost). It then moves on to describe several fall celebrations (Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles).

The Weekly Holy Day

SABBATH (SHABBAT¹²⁴)

“For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings” ([Leviticus 23:3](#)).

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made ([Genesis 2:1-3](#)).

Sabbath means “rest.” The Sabbath celebration, spoken of in [Leviticus 23](#), has its roots in the very creation of the world. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. That is, he separated it from the others in kind and character. He made it holy. Because He rested after six days of labor, He enjoins His people to do likewise. Thus, the Sabbath becomes a weekly reminder that God is the creator of all things. Whenever I read of God resting on the seventh day, I imagine Him reflecting on and enjoying the work that He had done. Obviously, this is an anthropomorphic sentiment, but it helps me understand the intended purpose of this day. As it was for God, so it can be for our children and for us. It is a day of rest from the fast pace of the week. It is a day to reflect on God and His creation. It is a day to reflect on the week’s activities. It is a day to worship and express thanks. It is a day to do good to our neighbors.

The Jewish Sabbath liturgy invokes images of not only the creation, but also the moment by moment sustaining of it by God’s almighty hand. As Colossians says, “in Him all things hold together.”

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who at your word brings on the evening twilight, with wisdom opens the gates of the heavens, and with understanding changes time and varies the seasons, and arranges the stars in their watches in the sky, according to your will. You create day and night; you roll away the light from before the darkness, and the darkness from before the light; you make the day to pass and the night to approach, and divide the day from the night. The Lord of hosts is your name; a God living and enduring continually. May you reign over us for ever and ever. Blessed are you, O Lord, who brings on the evening twilight.¹²⁵

Common Christian culture, until recent times, observed Sunday as a special day. It, too, was to be different from other days. Given the Sabbath’s roots in the creation rather than the Law, this seems appropriate. The day of rest was always intended to bless mankind, and, according to Isaiah, the Sabbath will continue, for all mankind, into the New Heavens and the New Earth:

[Isaiah 66:22-23](#) “For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,” declares the Lord, “So your offspring and your name will endure. And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me,” says the Lord.

For Christians, the Sabbath also speaks of our future rest in the Lord:

[Hebrews 4:9-11](#) So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience.

What continues to wreck the concept of Sabbath is legalism. Time and again it infiltrates the practice of a weekly rest and turns it into dull affair. God set aside a day for us to rest, to enjoy Him and His creation, and to do good deeds to others. Without such an appointed time, we would work seven days a week 365 days a year. If we did not set aside the time, we could let our relationship with God slip away. Unfortunately, the legalists cannot be comfortable until “work” is defined in detail. By the time they are done, the blessing and joy are gone. The day starts to speak of the sternness of God, rather than His loving-kindness. It loses sight of its roots in creation, rest, and fellowship with God. Instead, it becomes one more illustration of His awesome commands and our responsibility to obey them at all costs. It was true in Jesus’ day and it has often been true in Church practice. I am reminded of the story told by Laura Ingalls Wilder in her series *Little House on the Prairie*.

When Grandpa was a little boy, Laura, Sunday did not begin on Sunday morning, as it does now. It began at sundown on Saturday night.¹²⁶ Then everyone stopped every kind of work or play.

Supper was solemn. After supper, Grandpa’s father read aloud a chapter of the Bible, while everyone sat straight and still in his chair. Then they all knelt down, and their father said a long prayer. When he said, ‘Amen.’ They got up from their knees and each took a candle and went to bed. They must go straight to bed, with no playing, laughing or even talking.

Sunday morning they ate a cold breakfast, because nothing could be cooked on Sunday. Then they all dressed in their best clothes and walked to church. They walked, because hitching up the horses was work, and no work could be done on Sunday.

They must walk slowly and solemnly looking straight ahead. They must not joke or laugh, or even smile. Grandpa and his two brothers walked ahead, and their father and mother walked behind them.

In church, Grandpa and his brothers must sit perfectly still for two long hours and listen to the sermon. They dared not fidget on the hard bench. They dared not swing their feet. They dared not even turn their heads to look at the windows or the walls or the ceiling of the

church. They must sit perfectly motionless and never for one instant take their eyes from the preacher.

When church was over, they walked slowly home. They might talk on the way, but they must not talk loudly and they must never laugh or smile. At home they ate a cold dinner, which had been cooked the day before. Then all the long afternoon they must sit in a row on a bench and study their catechism, until at last the sun went down and Sunday was over.¹²⁷

This same attitude was present in Jesus' day. A distorted view of the Sabbath, held firmly by the Jewish leadership, inhibited them from recognizing Him as the Messiah. Sabbath controversies occupy all four of the gospels. In each, the controversy hinges on Jesus' practice of healing on the Sabbath. To the Jewish leadership, healing was work and should not take place on the Sabbath. Besides, the joy expressed by those Jesus healed "disrupted" the sanctity of the Sabbath. Then, as in Laura's day, the observance of the Sabbath was strictly constrained by tradition. Jesus' comments about the Sabbath speak more of blessing and service than cold soup.

"But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" ([Matthew 12:6-8](#)).

"How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" ([Matthew 12:12](#)).

Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath ([Mark 2:27](#)).

But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, *began* saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water *him*? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ([Luke 13:14-16](#)).

So, it is okay to show compassion on the Sabbath rather than rest. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Even those who accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath attended to the

comfort of their own animals on that day. They just could not extend the concept to people. At creation, God rested and enjoyed the work of His hands. He gave mankind a day for rest and fellowship. He gave mankind a day when it was possible to do good deeds, because during the rest of the week finding the time to do such things is harder. It should reflect love and joy. It should take on the characteristics of a holiday.

To close this section, I want to relate the story of someone whose life showed a balanced concept of the Sabbath for the Christian. That man was Eric Liddel. The movie, *Chariots of Fire*, told the story about his giving up an Olympic medal opportunity, because a qualifying heat, for his race, was to be run on Sunday. At that time, Eric Liddel rightly chose God's glory over his own. Less known is an incident that occurred shortly before he died, of a brain tumor, in a Japanese internment camp during WWII. The camp conditions were crowded and the young children were constantly at loose ends. There simply was nothing to do. Eric Liddel organized soccer games for the young people. Guess what? They played on Sunday! Perhaps he had a change of theology, but I think that he found the balance between two scriptures. The first, [Isaiah 58:13](#), tells us to "turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day." The second, [Matthew 12:12](#), says, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

The Spring Holy Days

PASSOVER (PESACH)

"In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the Lord's Passover" ([Leviticus 23:5](#)).

Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons *in them*; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat

any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, *both* its head and its legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord’s Passover. For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt. Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance” ([Exodus 12:1-14](#)).

The first month is Abib. In Hebrew, “abib” means green. It suggests the singular expression of spring: the re-greening, or re-birth, of the earth. For Israel, Passover means their birth as a nation. For this reason, although Leviticus gives only a few words to this holy day, Passover is the king of them all. It is by reason of Passover that Abib marks the beginning of the sacred Jewish Calendar. As the Lord told Moses, “This month ... is to be the first month of the year to you.” This is fitting, because Passover marks the beginning of the nation of Israel. When Moses commanded the congregation of Israel concerning this first Passover, they were still the slaves of the Egyptians. The day following this Passover meal, they were free.

The story’s elements are familiar: The Lord’s call to Moses from out of the burning bush; Moses before Pharaoh crying, “Let my people go”; the ten plagues; and the parting of the sea. Passover is the holiday for remembering these things. The Jewish celebration combines sights, words, songs, and tastes to communicate the story. The telling of the story surrounds a festive meal and contains these basic elements:

FOUR CUPS OF WINE

Although not mentioned in [Exodus 12](#), the Passover in modern times and the time of Jesus included drinking four cups of wine. These cups stand for the four-fold deliverance spoken by God in Exodus.

“Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the Lord, and **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you** from their bondage. **I will also redeem**

you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then **I will take you for My people**, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” ([Exodus 6:6, 7](#)).

The first cup speaks of our “being brought out.” The second speaks of our “deliverance from bondage.” The third speaks of our “redemption.” The fourth speaks of our “belonging.” The Gospel of Luke records the use of the first and third cups during the Last Supper:

And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood ([Luke 22:15-20](#)).

I understand this as meaning that Jesus did not inaugurate something new when He established communion, but rather identified and extended an existing tradition to communicate truth about Himself. The cup immediately after the meal was the “cup of redemption.” To Jesus and to us, it symbolizes the new covenant and our redemption, by His blood, from slavery to sin.

UNLEAVENED BREAD

In the Exodus story, there was no time to let the bread rise before the Israelites had to leave Egypt. Unleavened bread represents the speed of their salvation. It also speaks of sinlessness. I will have more to say about this in the next section, which is about the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

One interesting practice during the Passover celebration is the breaking of one of three pieces of unleavened bread. The first half is used immediately, but the second is wrapped in a cloth and hidden until after the meal. This is the bread that Jesus broke during the Last Supper. It speaks of His sinless perfection. The second piece wrapped, hidden, and resurrected speaks of Jesus death, burial, and resurrection.

BITTER HERBS

Tasting the bitter herbs, i.e. horseradish, is an experience to bring tears to the eyes and a dramatic reminder of the bitterness of slavery. It was eaten on the broken unleavened bread, so it can also speak of the bitter tears of Jesus in Gethsemane and the bitterness of His coming death for mankind's sin.

LAMB

Since the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD, the Jews do not eat roasted lamb during Passover. Instead they commemorate the lamb with the roasted shank-bone of a lamb. The lamb represents protection against the last plague that befell the Egyptians. It seems that the Angel of Death would also have slain the first born of the Israelites, were it not for the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts. On seeing the blood, the Angel of Death passed over the house. From this the celebration gets its name.

OTHER THINGS

There are other elements in the Passover celebration. There is a mixture of apples, wine, nuts, and honey called "Charoseth." The apples are grated and left exposed to turn brown. Consequently the mixture looks a little bit like the mud the Israelites used to make bricks.

There is some green vegetable like parsley or celery to speak of spring and hope. There is salt water to represent tears. There are 10 drops of wine dripped from the second cup to represent the 10 plagues on the Egyptians. The 10 drops lower the volume of wine in the cups and indicate that the suffering of the Egyptians reduces our joy.

MULTI-SENSORY LEARNING

Sweet, bitter, and salty tastes for the mouth; dripped wine; broken bread; and so forth are devices to teach the deliverance of God in a unique way. As I said before, it appeals to all ages.

JESUS AND PASSOVER

During the Last Supper, Jesus appropriated elements of the Jewish Passover. That is, He endowed them with new meaning, and that meaning was tied to Himself. Instead of having meaning restricted to God's past redemption, these elements now symbolize the redemption of Jesus Christ as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" by His death at Calvary. At Passover, the Old and New Covenants meet. He is the lamb without defect. He is the broken bread. He is the cup of Redemption. As He said in Luke, He will not partake of Passover again, until He can share it with us in the coming Kingdom. The hand of God delivered from slavery in the past. On the cross, He delivered us from slavery to sin.

The early church clearly identified Jesus with Passover. Paul says,

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of *dough*? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth ([1 Corinthians 5:6-8](#)).

Leaven represents sin. Allowing sin in our lives and the church has a corrupting influence. But we are unleavened, because Christ our Passover has been sacrificed. Thus we see that Jesus completes the promise of Passover.

Note the suggestion in Paul's words, "Let us celebrate the feast." This implies that the early Christians celebrated Passover for some time. Some would argue that Paul is simply referring to Communion. That ignores Paul's Jewish upbringing. Does not [Exodus 12:14](#) call Passover "a feast?" Why would Paul use the term "feast" and intend an ambiguous reading of it? Along these lines note also [Acts 20:6](#), "We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread." The least that can be said is that the early church marked a Jewish Calendar. In any case, the observance of Passover is today growing among the churches. This is a good thing. It is a celebration of the salvation of God from slavery in Egypt and slavery to sin. To the young ones in our families, it provides an opportunity to present the gospel to our children at a very early age.

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

"Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work" ([Leviticus 23:6-8](#)).

“Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and another holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you. You shall also observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is an alien or a native of the land. You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread” ([Exodus 12:15-20](#)).

“You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt” ([Exodus 13:8, 9](#)).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is an extension of Passover. The celebration is simple. Before it begins, you pass through your entire house to clear out all leavening agents and foods made with leaven. Leavening agents are things like yeast, baking powder, baking soda, and sour dough. Leaven makes bread and rolls rise and become soft and fluffy.

For centuries the Jews have made a special event in the evening of this day. Crumbs of bread and other things are planted throughout the house. In the evening, the father leads the children through the house with a feather and dish to search for the last traces of leaven. When they find them, the father swishes them into the dish with the feather. After all remaining traces are swept away, they are taken outside and burned.

For the next seven days, all food is unleavened, but the recipes are incredibly creative. Whipped egg whites can add sponginess to cake recipes. Unleavened flour is made into “matzo balls” and used in soups. Nevertheless, for seven days the diet reminds the household and the children that God delivered the Israelites from slavery.

Unleavened bread relates two aspects of God’s deliverance. The first is the simple fact that the Israelites left Egypt in such a hurry that they did not have time to let their bread rise. The second is that the first several days saw them hurrying away, so that there still was not

enough time to let bread rise. There would be no safety until there was enough distance between them and those who would come after them. Then they came to the Red Sea. In this sense the Feast of Unleavened Bread marks the very first stage of the journey. It was a time of hurry and danger, and then the trap.

We know, of course, that the Lord parted the Red Sea so that the Israelites could cross over. When Pharaoh's armies followed, the sea came together again and destroyed them. This celebration is an effective reminder of God's faithfulness. [Exodus 13:8](#) says, "You shall tell you son on that day ..." The Bible anticipates that children will ask what the change of diet is about. When they do, you can tell them the whole story. Besides, young children get to pretend what it must have been like, at least as far as food goes, to live during those first days after leaving Egypt.

Given that leaven also symbolizes sin, this feast is an object lesson in righteousness. As the family cleans the house and searches for all leaven, they play out the process of sanctification. It is a reminder of God's righteousness. For those of us who are Christians, this Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit as He searches out and frees us from the sin that inhabits our house. As [Psalm 139](#) says,

Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)).

WAVE OFFERING OF FIRST FRUITS

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord. Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the Lord for a soothing aroma, with its drink offering, a fourth of a hin of wine. Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places'" ([Leviticus 23:9-14](#)).

One of the days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread will be a Sabbath. The day following this Sabbath is the celebration of First Fruits¹²⁸. On this day, the first sheaf of harvested barley is brought to the Lord and waved before Him. The grain is then left for the priest and

for the poor. This is an act of thanksgiving for the Lord's provision and bounty. No one is to eat from the new harvest until the wave offering is made.

There is no direct Jewish Celebration of this today. However, given its placement between Passover and Pentecost and its emphasis on the Lord's provision, I see it as a reminder of the manna in the desert, which began shortly after the crossing of the Red Sea.

In terms of Christianity, it is worth noting that the resurrection of Jesus Christ occurred the day following the Sabbath. His resurrection corresponds to this wave offering. He is, Himself, a first fruits offering. As Paul says,

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death ([1 Corinthians 15:20-26](#)).

Jesus' resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection. It is the promise that we will not see eternal death, but share in eternal life. When He rose from the dead, we became able to share in the new harvest, which I believe is the Holy Spirit.

First Fruits is such a simple holiday, and, yet, it has such significant meaning to us in the Church. Passover is our redemption, Unleavened Bread is our sanctification, First Fruits is our promise of eternal life and resurrection.

I have a personal First Fruits story to tell. I have for years looked upon the Old Testament as containing principles of righteousness living. This is not to be confused with legalism. It should rather be viewed as an attempt to view the Law as Paul did (see [1 Corinthians 9:9](#), [1 Timothy 5:18](#), and [1 Timothy 1:8](#)). Anyway, I began meditating about the First Fruits offering and how someone who is not a farmer might participate. In my heart, I committed to a special practice to celebrate the event whenever I got a raise. The gross net increase of the first paycheck containing the raise would be a First Fruits offering to the Lord. This was not to gain approval or special status. It was simply to say thanks and acknowledge that He provides for me every day.

Following this heart commitment, not a month went by before my manager at IBM came to me and said, "I am giving you a raise. It is early and out of grid." The translation of these

words are, "IBM policy says it's too early to give you a raise, but I am giving you one anyway. IBM says that your next raise should not be more than such-and-such, but I am giving you more than that." At the time this occurred, my wife and I had custody of my three nieces. IBM benefits did not cover them. My manager had worked out the raise to help our situation.

PENTECOST (SHAVUOT)

'You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths¹²⁹ . You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two *loaves* of bread for a wave offering made of two-tenths *of an ephah*; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the Lord. Along with the bread you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the Lord. You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one-year-old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the Lord; they are to be holy to the Lord for the priest. On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual statute in all your dwelling places throughout your generations. When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the Lord your God' ([Leviticus 23:15-22](#)).

In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain ([Exodus 19:1, 2](#)).

Pentecost gets its name from the counting of fifty days from the Sabbath following Passover. This places the holiday in the third month (Sivan) of the Jewish Calendar. It coincides with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, which is what the holiday celebrates. The most unique aspect of this celebration in the temple was the waving of two **leavened** loaves of bread before the Lord. This was the only leavened offering made in the temple! These loaves, like the earlier wave offering, are also declared to be a First Fruits offering. Perhaps the loaves were to look like the two tablets of the Law.

The Jewish celebration of Pentecost often begins by staying up all night to read Torah. They emphasize the Ten Commandments. In this way they remember the events that took place at Mount Sinai. Also, because of its association with the spring harvest, the Jews will read the Book of Ruth. And because Mount Sinai also looks forward to the time when Israel would enter the “land flowing with milk and honey,” the foods of Pentecost are rich with milk, cream, and honey. This is the season for the cheese blintzes and apples dipped in honey. I should add that the honey also speaks of the sweetness of God’s word.

Pentecost completes the Exodus story. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread tell of the escape from Egypt. The First Fruits speaks of manna and God’s provision in the desert. Pentecost speaks of the giving of the Law, which in some respects became the Constitution for Israel, the nation.

In Christianity, Pentecost marks the giving of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:1](#)). Perhaps Paul was even thinking of the wave offering of the two loaves when he wrote,

For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having **the first fruits of the Spirit**, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body ([Romans 8:19-23](#)).

Today’s Messianic Jews¹³⁰ have an interesting view of the two **leavened** loaves of bread offered in the temple during Pentecost. Since leaven is a symbol for sin, why is this offering different from all other grain offerings by specifying the inclusion of leaven? It is this: Because of the atonement brought about by Jesus, the Holy Spirit can indwell us and we are able to “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace.” Though we still contain leaven, we can get help in time of need. They see in the loaves the Jewish and Gentile believers offered before the Lord as first fruits of what is to come. The Church is not complete without the Jews and the Gentiles. I find the argument compelling. To me, it is just one more example of the prophetic core in the appointed times. In this light, the practice of reading Ruth also foreshadowed the unity of the Jewish and Gentile believers.

Jesus and the Spring Holy Days

The flow of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost mark the timings of two stories of real history. The first story is that of deliverance from slavery in Egypt and the giving of Law. The second story is that of deliverance from slavery to sin and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Two stories with different emphasis and meanings. It should be noted, however, that there is no hint that the older meanings were either discarded or demeaned. In fact, the older meanings are essential to the new meanings. In any case, the following table succinctly shows the relationships:

	Old Covenant (Shadow)	New covenant (Substance)
Passover	Moses the mediator Lamb's blood Unleavened Bread Wine	Jesus the mediator Messiah's blood His body His blood
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Removing leaven Redemption from slavery in Egypt	Sanctification Redemption from slavery to sin
Wave Offering of First Fruits	Waving of the sheaf Manna	Jesus' resurrection Bread of life
Pentecost	Fire on the mountain Giving of the Law Law written on stone Two leavened loaves Birth of a nation	Fire on the believers Giving of the Holy Spirit Law written in the heart Jews and Gentiles Birth of the Church

The Fall Holy Days

FEAST OF TRUMPETS (YOM TERUAH; ROSH HASHANNAH)

Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord’” ([Leviticus 23:23-25](#)).

[Leviticus 23:23](#) begins with the words “Again the Lord spoke to Moses ...” and, therefore, indicates the start of a new section. Following this verse are the commands concerning the holidays of the fall season.

The first of these occurs on the first day of the seventh month of the religious calendar. To the ancient Hebrew authors this was the month of Ethanim. In the modern calendar, the month is called Tishri. The holy day is designated as “a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets.” The phrase “blowing of trumpets” translates the Hebrew word “teruah.” The word is loosely like the English word “fanfare.” Like “fanfare,” “teruah” has an association with the sound of a trumpet, but really means those things for which we might sound a trumpet: to alert, to call to battle, to announce the arrival of a king, etc. In the case of this holiday, the trumpets announce the coming of the holidays to follow. The holidays that follow, therefore, are incredibly important. Perhaps, it is better to say that you did not want to be found unprepared when their day arrived. As the Boy Scouts say, “Be prepared!”

The Jews begin blowing ram’s horns (shofars) in their synagogues in the sixth month (Elul) and continue up to the Day of Atonement. The trumpets remind the people that the Day of Atonement is approaching. It is a time to reflect on the year and the state of your character and your relationship to God. Then, on the first day of the seventh month (Rosh Hashanah), there is a special service that features an elaborate ceremony of trumpet blowing.

The trumpets remind the Jews of at least eight things¹³¹ :

1. To prepare for the coming Day of Atonement by examining the life you have lived this past year.
2. To celebrate the creation with God as its King. This is because, according to Jewish tradition, creation began on the first day of the seventh month.

3. To remember that the Lord descended upon Mount Sinai with the loud blast of a shofar ([Exodus 19:16-19](#)).

4. To imagine the sound of the heavenly shepherd recalling those who have strayed from Israel's fold.

5. To rejoice in freedom from slavery. In the past, slaves were freed at the blast of a shofar.

6. To rejoice in restoration. Property was returned at the blast of the shofar at the Jubilee Year ([Leviticus 25:9](#)).

7. To remember Abraham's obedience when he offered his son Isaac. When Abraham sacrificed Isaac, a ram was caught in the thicket by its horns.

8. To look forward to the coming of Messiah's kingdom, which the blast of the shofar will bring in.

As the spring holy days spoke of the first coming of Messiah, so we can begin to see that the fall holidays speak of His return. This is seen by the consistent imagery of trumpets in the New Testament.

And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other ([Matthew 24:31](#)).

... in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed ([1 Corinthians 15:52](#)).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first ([1 Thessalonians 4:16](#)).

And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them ([Revelation 8:6](#)).

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent

of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts ([Revelation 9:20, 21](#)).

The first three verses above have direct correspondence to the final trumpet sounded on the eve of the Day of Atonement. The next two ([Revelation 8:6](#) and [9:20, 21](#)) have clear association with the trumpets announcing the coming of the Day. Like the trumpets that announce the Lord as King over His creation, so trumpets announce the coming of Messiah as King. Like the trumpets that announce the Jubilee Year and freedom to slaves, so trumpets announce the translation of our corruptible flesh into incorruptible new bodies. As the trumpets sounded before the Day of Atonement call the Jews to repentance, so these trumpets call all of mankind to repent before the terrible Day of the Lord. The seven trumpets in Revelation, like the shofars that sound in the synagogues, are a call to the earth to repent. Consequently, we have the significance of [Revelation 9:20, 21](#): The trumpets have sounded and the world has not repented. The Bowl Judgments, containing the Wrath of God, may now be poured on the earth.

In short, the trumpets announce the coming of the King. As such, they call for the people of God to prepare their hearts for His coming. As Jesus has said, He wants to come and find us at our posts. For the lost, the trumpets call for repentance. Failing repentance, the trumpets announce the coming Judgment of God. Consequently, the next holy day will be, for each person, either a Day of Atonement or the Day of Judgment.

DAY OF ATONEMENT (YOM KIPPUR)

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord. You shall not do any work on this same day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the Lord your God. If there is any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It is to be a Sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath” ([Leviticus 23:26-32](#)).

“He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the doorway of the tent of meeting. Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot for the Lord fell, and make it a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive

before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat. ... for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the Lord. It is to be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, that you may humble your souls; it is a permanent statute. So the priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father's place shall make atonement: he shall thus put on the linen garments, the holy garments, and make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar. He shall also make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. Now you shall have this as a permanent statute, to make atonement for the sons of Israel for all their sins once every year." And just as the Lord had commanded Moses, so he did ([Leviticus 16:7-10; 30-34](#)).

The Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, represents the day when the priest puts on special clothes and makes offerings to atone, or cleanse, the holy sanctuary, the temple, and the altar. He then makes atonement for the priests and the people. The day is solemn and serious. It is a day of complete rest and fasting with a goal of humbling the soul. As a holy day, it serves to remind us of the gravity and offense of sin. The eve of the Day of Atonement begins with the blast of a shofar. Afterwards, the shofars are silent until next year.

Yom Kippur begins in the evening of the ninth day of the seventh month. In modern Judaism there is an important liturgical chant sung on this evening. It is called Kol Nidre, which in Hebrew means "All Vows." It is a rescinding of vows: a cleansing of vows that were made, but remain unfulfilled and un-fulfillable. Kol Nidre originated in seventh century Spain, where Jews were tortured or burned unless they bound themselves, by oath, to cease from Jewish religious expression. Those Jews, whose constitutions could not rise to suffering an excruciating and fearful death, renounced their Judaism. When better days came along, the Kol Nidre was created to absolve them of their rash vows and re-open full fellowship in the community. To me it catches the spirit of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. It is the full expression of forgiveness to one who forsook the community, but later came to his senses.

If Kol Nidre is the open door to renewed fellowship for the repentant apostate, those who treat the day lightly stand in the path of destruction. As the Lord says, "As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people." Those who would work on the day when sin is to be confronted, fail to understand the seriousness of sin. It is to say, by my actions, that sin is not a problem for me.

Before the destruction of the temple, the atonement of the people involved two goats. By casting lots the priest chose between the goats. One was chosen for the Lord (hwhyl, l'yhw) the other was chosen for Azazel (lzazul, l'azazel) (usually translated as scapegoat). The priest transferred the sins of the people onto the scapegoat and then it was driven into the wilderness. The first goat paid the penalty of the people's sin, the second took the sin away. The ancient Jews considered the two goats to be two halves of a single sacrifice. Therefore, they would select two goats that very closely resembled each other.

The reference to Azazel only appears in [Leviticus 16](#). It appears nowhere else in the scriptures. Although it is typically translated as "scapegoat," the actual language suggests a being for which this goat is chosen. As one goat is chosen "for (to) the Lord," so the other is chosen "for (to) Azazel." Who or what is Azazel?

There is only one extra-biblical reference to him: the Book of Enoch. It identifies him as one of the angels (as hinted by [Genesis 6](#)) who corrupted the earth. An intriguing connection to the Day of Atonement occurs in Enoch chapter 10.

"And again the Lord said to Raphael: 'Bind Azazel hand and foot, and cast him into the darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dudael, and cast him therein. And place upon him rough and jagged rocks, and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire.'"

How reliable might this reference be? This is a hard question. The Book of Enoch does not have the antiquity it claims, but it is still thousands of years closer to the meaning of Azazel than we have anywhere else. The fact that Jude quotes from it ([Jude 14, 15](#)), at least, attests to its cultural pertinence. On the other hand, the Septuagint translation of Azazel, avpopompaiw| ("a carrying away"), is closer to the spirit of a "scapegoat."

Nevertheless, the Enoch picture is intriguing. The goat "for (to) Azazel" is sent to the domain of Azazel in the wilderness. We have a picture of Israel's sins taken away and cast into the abyss to await the final judgment.

Although the Day of Atonement is about the payment and removal of the sins of the nation for a year, it also looks forward to the day of Israel's salvation. Note the thematic connections in the following verses.

BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen ([Revelation 1:7](#)).

“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” ([Zechariah 12:10](#)).

“I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed ([Daniel 7:13, 14](#)).

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other ([Matthew 24:30, 31](#)).

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS” ([Romans 11:25-27](#)).

First, [Revelation 1:7](#) links two Old Testament Messianic prophecies: [Zechariah 12:10](#) and [Daniel 7:13, 14](#). That is, the day the Lord returns is the day that Israel receives “the Spirit of grace and supplication” and finds national salvation. Second, Matthew links these events to the blowing of a great trumpet (or shofar) that begins the Day of Atonement. Third, it is the day to which Paul, in [Romans 11:25-27](#), looked ahead. As the goat chosen for Azazel takes away the sin from Israel, so according to Paul the coming of the Lord will take away the sins of Israel. The meaning of all this is that the future fulfillment of the Day of Atonement is the second coming of Jesus Christ on the earth and the salvation of Israel.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES (SUCCOTH)

Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord. On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the Lord; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. These are the appointed times of the Lord which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the Lord—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, *each* day’s matter on its own day—besides *those of* the Sabbaths of the Lord, and besides your gifts and besides all your vows and freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord. On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the Lord for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall thus celebrate it *as* a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It *shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” ([Leviticus 23:33-43](#)).

Five days after the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) begins. The principle element of this celebration is “living in booths” for a week. The actual practice among the Jews consists of building a “hut” in the backyard or on the porch. They make the hut by tying branches together, because it is not to be nailed or constructed in any way that suggests permanence. In fact, the properly made hut will leak. This virtue permits the occupants to see the stars. Although the Jews do not actually live in these things, they will share meals in them and sometimes spend at least one night camping out. I know of a Jewish family that sometimes takes a backpacking trip during this time.

I like to call the Feast of Tabernacles, “The holiday of the manifest presence of God.” Here is why. Leviticus says, “Israel shall live in booths, so that your generations may know that the sons of Israel lived in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt.” The hut lets children pretend to be Israelites in the wilderness. So, what was it like in those days? The twelve tribes had their camps on the north, south, east, and west. In the center stood the tabernacle. Over the tabernacle appeared the manifested presence of the Lord.

The Lord said to Moses, “How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.

But Moses said to the Lord, “Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up this people from their midst, and they will tell *it* to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O Lord, are in the midst of this people, for **You, O Lord, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.** Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, ‘Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, ‘The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth *generations*.’ Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”

So the Lord said, “I have pardoned *them* according to your word; but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord” ([Numbers 14:11-21](#)).

What an incredible sight to see everyday. “They have heard that You, O Lord, are in the midst of this people, for You, O Lord, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night.” When the Lord wanted them to move, the pillars moved. When the Lord wanted them to stay, the pillars stayed. This is the tale parents can tell their children during the dinner meal in the hut. When the sky gets dark and you can gaze at the stars, the parents can tell their children how the universe manifests the presence of God. It is a good time to read [Psalm 19](#).

The Feast of Tabernacles also looks ahead to the Messianic Kingdom. It looks ahead to the time when the presence of God, through the reign of His son, is as manifest on the earth as it was in the days of the wilderness travels. In fact, according to Zechariah, the Feast of Tabernacles will be an international celebration during the Kingdom.

And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one. ... Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations

that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no *rain will fall* on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths ([Zechariah 14:9, 16-19](#)).

It should be clear, by now, how the fall holidays of Leviticus track the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The blowing of trumpets speak of the warnings and shaking on the earth to call all mankind to repent. The Day of Atonement speaks of the day that Jesus will physically return and the day that Israel as a nation will find salvation. The Feast of Tabernacles speaks of the Millennial Kingdom.

	Old Covenant (Shadow)	New Covenant (Substance)
Blowing of Trumpets	Trumpets announce the coming Day of Atonement.	A series of plagues announce the coming Day of the Lord.
Day of Atonement	Annual atonement and removal of sin from Israel.	The return of Jesus Christ and the salvation of Israel.
Feast of Tabernacles	Remembering the wilderness travels with the presence of God in the camp.	The reign of Jesus Christ over the Kingdom of Israel.

Conclusion

Should the Church of Jesus Christ celebrate these things? Four times in [Leviticus 23](#) we are told, “It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.” Of course, the command is addressed to the Jews. On the other hand, these appointed times testify over and over again about the past and future work of our Lord.

Should we not make room for the principal ones like Passover, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles? These speak of three major doctrines of our faith: the Death of Jesus for our sins, His return, and His coming Kingdom. Think how clearly these holidays speak of these truths, because they are free from the secular clamor that surrounds Christmas and Easter. Besides, as I said above, the Feast of Tabernacles appears to be the big international holiday of the Millennial Kingdom.

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths ([Zechariah 14:16](#)).

We can share the Passover meal with family and friends and celebrate Jesus Christ as our Passover Lamb. We can fast for the Day of Atonement to humble ourselves before God and reflect on His return, and pray that we be found at our posts. We can build our huts during the Feast of Tabernacles and look ahead to the coming Kingdom. In this way, our children can begin learning important truths at very early ages, free from the confusing signals of secular culture.

With the tastes of Passover, the waving of the sheaf during First Fruits, the waving of two leaven loaves on Pentecost, the sound of trumpets, the fasting on the Day of Atonement, and the huts of the Feast of Tabernacles, the story of God's deliverance and salvation is told without words. The events stimulate the questions of the very young and provide mental pictures of sublime concepts. These days speak of past and future deliverance. They are historical and prophetic at the same time. How great is our God who can so engineer time and history to use the same holidays twice!

¹²¹ This message was preached by Don Curtis ([email](#)) an excellent student of the Scriptures, teacher, and good friend. Don graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 1974 with a degree in Philosophy. He has since become a Senior Computer Programmer with the IBM Corporation. For a number of years, Don and his family attended Community Bible Chapel in Richardson, Texas, until his job took him to Atlanta, Georgia. Partly from Bob Deffinbaugh's influence, biblical studies and teaching have become a passion in his Christian life. Don is currently an elder and teacher at Cobb Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Kennesaw, GA.

¹²² Our calendar is known as the Gregorian Calendar because of the reforms Pope Gregory instituted. In particular, he mandated a 10 day correction in 1582 AD, which meant that October 4th was followed by October 15th that year. Since then, the century years, like

1600, 1700, etc., are not leap years unless they are evenly divisible by 400. Thus 1900 is not a leap year, but 2000 is.

¹²³ The Jewish Calendar has preserved the Babylonian names for the months. The Bible records four of the Canaanite names, the other eight Canaanite names are lost. Of the Babylonian names, the Bible only refers to Nisan.

¹²⁴ The title for each section includes the Christian and (Jewish) name for the holiday.

¹²⁵ Hertz, Joseph *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book (Revised Edition)*, Copyright 1948, 1975 Ruth Hecht, Bloch Publishing Company, p. 365.

¹²⁶ This is an interesting historical note that shows the degree to which Christianity, in the past, understood the Biblical notion of time. As Genesis says, “there was evening and there was morning, one day.” The Jews still reckon the days in their calendar as beginning at sundown. This was why, when Jesus was crucified, that it was so important to have the executed criminals dead and off their crosses before sundown.

¹²⁷ Wilder, Laura Ingalls *Little House in the Big Woods*, Harper Trophy (1971 edition) pp. 87-89

¹²⁸ Although the text in [Leviticus 23](#) does not make this timing explicitly clear, it can be determined implicitly from the calculation for the date of Pentecost in [Leviticus 23:15, 16](#).

¹²⁹ Several Greek manuscripts of [Luke 6:1](#) contain the phrase “sabbatw| deuteroprwtw|” or “second first sabbath.” Most translations, including the NASB and NET bypass the strange phrasing and simply say “a certain Sabbath” or simply “a Sabbath.” From the perspective of [Leviticus 23](#), it would be better to translate [Luke 6:1](#) as “On the Sabbath following the second Passover of Jesus ministry ...” To put this another way, the Jews counted Sabbaths following Passover leading to Pentecost. First Sabbath is the first following Passover; Second Sabbath is the second following Passover; and so forth up to the Seventh Sabbath. By saying “second first Sabbath,” Luke, being closer to the Jewish roots of Christianity, is pinpointing the start of the second year of Jesus’ ministry.

¹³⁰ For those who may not be aware of this contemporary move of God, Messianic Jews are Jews who believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. They fully affirm salvation by faith alone. What makes them distinct is that they maintain their Jewish identity. Texts that

point to the legitimacy of what they are doing include [Romans 1:16](#), [Romans 9–11](#), [Acts 21:17-25](#).

¹³¹ A fuller description can be found in *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* by Joseph H. Hertz Copyright 1948, 1975 Ruth Hecht pp. 864, 865

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