

The Feasts of God

We are taking our Biblical reference from Leviticus 23:1ff. God spoke to Moses, "These are my special acts of worship, the festivals, that I would like you to think upon in your worship.

The Sabbath

Under the rules given by God to the Jews, you are to work for six days but on the seventh, it is a day of rest, a day of sacred worship. On that day you are not to do any work, it is a Sabbath to the Lord, it is the Sabbath of the Lord, i.e. both appointed by and dedicated to Him. The origin is given in Genesis 2:2,3. It is related to the creation of the world by God.

So why does the modern church not fulfill that instruction. The Christian church does not have to follow the Jewish laws as we are now under the Grace of the death and risen Lord's rules, there is no sacrifice to be made to pay for sin, He did it once on the cross and His death was accepted by God the Father, as was fulfilling the punishment for the sinful Israelite and basically for Mankind's life, just once a year, this was done under the old Jewish rules. The Lord Jesus rose from the grave and came back to life on the Sunday, so it was felt by the early church to mean that Sunday was to become the Holy Day of each week, it was originally a day of rest, unfortunately, Mankind has felt that it was not to be a day of rest.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Passover.

This actually started as part of the departure from Egypt, God, through Moses, had sent various plagues upon the Egyptians to make Pharaoh let the Tribe of Jews out of the Egyptian nation, to escape the use of them as slaves. This carried on until the final plague where the first born of every Egyptian and their animals would be exposed to the power of God when He visited each house. Except the Jews, they were instructed to keep a special, but perfect, lamb as part of the family for a few days in their homes, this meant that it became part of the family. They were to eat unleavened bread for the next seven days, on the last day they are then to kill the lamb, as it had become a pet it would affect them personally, then before dark they were to paint the door posts and top lintel of the door of their home with the blood. That evening they were to eat unleavened bread for seven days, they had to make sure that there was no leaven in the house. If they eat any leaven bread they will be cut off from Israel. They were to have a meal, of unleavened bread, spices and the lamb, they were also to be dressed and behave as if they were soon leave. During these seven days no work other than preparing their food would take place.

Then, on the night designated, when the power of God would pass by each houses, if it did not see the blood, then the male, first born human or animal, would die in that house. This actually applied to anyone, Egyptian or Jew. It was only the Jew who prepared as instructed, but there was nothing to stop an Egyptian also doing the act if they wanted to.

As a result of so many Egyptian people and animals dieing, Pharaoh therefore lets the Jews go.

The Feast introduce by God and later given by God in Leviticus 23:4ff is to remember and celebrate this action, the Jews had already done this for many years. This was to become the first month of their year, see Exodus 12:13-15.

It was just before this feast, on the Friday, that Jesus was crucified, He took the anger of our very holy God for the sins of all of the world, past, present and the future sin's of Mankind. All a person had to do was admit that they were a sinner and ask for forgiveness, then God would forgive each person personally, and the Holy Spirit would come into that persons life.

Unfortunately we still had our old evil nature which was against the Holy Spirit and this has allowed Satan to tempt and try to pull us back to the old way of life, but if we actually meant it, then there was no way you would be removed from the power of God.

The festival will start upon the twilight time on the fourteenth day of the first month, this would be the month of Abib (later to become Nison) and would be on our calendar, the second half of March and the first part of April. For seven days they will eat only unleavened bread, then in the evening they would eat the Lamb, roasted by fire. If the lamb meat was too much for a family then they can share with another household. All the lamb was to be eaten, anything left was to be burnt by fire.

The offering of first Fruits

v10 When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, indicating that it was when they were raising crops in the Promised land.

The sheaf, of barley, is assumed as it ripened first, was to be taken by the priest and moved towards the altar, an offering to God in thanks, and then moved away from the altar, receiving it back,

v 11 The morrow after the Sabbath indicates that the day would be sixteenth day of Abib, and thus shows that Jesus rose again as the "First Fruit" from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:23.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

Roman 8:29 .

"29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

The Feast of Weeks

This was also known as Feast of the Harvest.

Exodus 23:14-16.

"14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

15 Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

16 And the feast of harvest, the first fruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field."

Later it became the Feast of Pentecost, a Greek word pentēkostē meaning "fiftieth" day

Acts 2:1,

"1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."

Leviticus 23:15,16.

"15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete:

16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD."

This day was the day that the Holy Spirit came upon the 120 disciples, the day that the Jews were celebrating the conclusion of the harvest,

Acts 2:2-4

"2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

The Feast of Tabernacles

A number of special actions take place during the seventh month, On the first day the Israelites were to observe a day of rest, a Sabbath,

Leviticus 23;24,25.

" In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.

25 Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD."

This commenced with the blowing of trumpets, probably ram's horns. This observance has set apart the whole of the seventh month as a sabbatical month. Apart from the number of the month, it was also when Israel received the once a year forgiveness for her sins, the month was called Tishri

The Feast of the Tabernacles or the Day of Atonement

We move back to **Leviticus 16:1-34.**

In fact we now need to make the offering for the sins of the people of Israel and for the peoples relationship with God, the forgiveness for sin is for the whole nation of Israel.

This was a very important Day for the Israel people.

The high Priest was not normally allowed into the Holy of Holies, to be inside the veil, where the mercy seat and the Ark of the covenant were. The action was to occur once a year by the high priest and it had to be done according to the following instructions:-

1) The High Priest needs to be made clean before he could offer a sacrifice for the people.

Leviticus 16:3-4.

"3 Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.

4 He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on."

The priest had to wash and put on a special holy linen coat, then offer the bullock to God. This was designated as the sin offering for the priest and his house

2) Leviticus 16:5-8

"5 And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

6 And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.

7 And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

8 And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat."

Compare this with what is said about Jesus in Hebrews 7:22-28

"22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

3) The Priest then took the two goats, after they had been presented to God. These two goats were signed lots, one for the Lord and one was to be "the scapegoat". which means in Hebrew, "complete removal." The function of the live goat was to take away all the sins of the people, to show that the sins had been removed as evidence of the action of atonement.

4) The Priest now enters the Holy of Holies, for the first time.

Leviticus 16:12

" And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the Vail:

13 And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: "

The smoke of the incense covers the Mercy Seat so that the priest cannot see God and so die.

5)The Priest reenters the Holy of Holies, the second time.

The priest now puts the blood of his sin offering on the mercy seat seven times, then kills the chosen goat.

Leviticus 16:14

"14 And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

6)The Priest re-enters the Holy of Holies, the third time.

The priest kills the goat and then reenters through the veil to put the blood on the mercy seat as an offering.

Leviticus 16:14

15 Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the Vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:"

7)The priest leaves the Holy of Holies.

8) The priest now makes an atonement for himself and the sins of the people, and finally for the the tabernacle itself.

Leviticus 16:16-19

"16 And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

18 And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about.

19 And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel."

9) The final act of the atonement was for the priest to take the live goat out of the camp,

Leviticus 16:20-22

"20 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:

21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:

22 And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness."

10)The High priest returns back into the Tabernacle outer courts, washes and changes his clothes into his normal priest clothes.

When the man who had taken the goat out into the wilderness returned, he had to wash himself and his clothes before he came into the camp.

Leviticus 16:26

"26 And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp."

Leviticus 16:27-28

"27 And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.

28 And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp."

Any parts of the bullock and goat which were left over from the sacrifices, were to be taken out of the camp and destroyed by burning. Those performing this then had to wash themselves and their clothes before returning to the camp.

The Feast of Tabernacles, or the feast of booths

Leviticus 23:34

"34 The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD.

35 On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.

36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein."

This lasted seven days, the first and last being days of worship. The fruit was gathered in and the people dwelt in temporary booths made of branches and trees for the week,

Leviticus 23:39-43

"39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath.

40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

43 That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

There are two other feasts kept by the Jews, but not implemented by God.

The feast of Purim

Esther 9:1FF

"1 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them. "

This was kept as a time of remembrance of the actions of Haman, it was a day of feasts and gladness.

The Final feast

Which celebrated the cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabacus in 164 B.C. following the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes.