

Lesson 4 27th May, 2018

The Holy Feasts of Israel

Lesson Scope: [Leviticus 23-27](#)

References in brackets refer to the lesson scope unless otherwise noted

Lesson Focus

Lessons 1 and 2 emphasized God's plan and provision for sinful man to worship the holy God. The sacrificial system mediated by holy priests looked forward to Christ. The holy laws helped men to understand how a redeemed people should live. The holy feasts, which are outlined in this lesson, emphasize the experience of a holy people living under God's blessing.

The feasts of the Lord were inspirational events for the Old Testament saints, and they are beautiful types for us. These holy assemblies were times of great joy, heart searching, remembering, and anticipation. They served to preserve the unity of the group as the Israelites came together to the feasts. These solemn occasions helped to keep in focus the history of God working with His people.

Worship and service are both essential to a right relationship with God. "The feasts of the LORD," which inspired the Old Testament saints, abound in beautiful types for the New Testament believer.

The study of these feasts is meaningful, but this lesson will require much study from the lesson scope because the printed text is only a bare outline of these feasts.

The spiritual meanings of these feasts are reflected in the lesson outline—divine deliverance, provision, redemption, and rest. While Israel experienced all of these, the feasts pointed forward to the great blessings we have in Christ today. Be sure to emphasize New Testament teaching, we do not want to confuse Old Testament and New Testament concepts.

Lesson Aim: To teach the spiritual significance of the Old Testament feasts.

Theme Verse: [Nahum 1:15](#). Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

Lesson Text

Divine Deliverance

[Leviticus 23:4-6](#) These *are* the feasts of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. ⁵ In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover. ⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

Divine Provision

[Leviticus 23:10-11](#) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: ¹¹ And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

[Leviticus 23:15-19](#) 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. ¹⁷ Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; *they are* the firstfruits unto the LORD. ¹⁸ And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be *for* a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, *even* an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto the LORD. ¹⁹ Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

[Leviticus 23:22](#) And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: *I am* the LORD your God.

Divine Redemption

Leviticus 23:24-28 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, 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. ²⁶ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²⁷ Also on the tenth *day* of this seventh month *there shall be* a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. ²⁸ And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it *is* a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.

Divine Rest

Leviticus 23:34-36 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, 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*.

Leviticus 23:42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths.

Questions for Study

Divine Deliverance

1. Why did God design that His people gather together often?
2. What truths were kept alive by the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Divine Provision

3. Why should God receive an offering of first fruits?
4. How does Pentecost especially typify New Testament truth?

Divine Redemption

5. What events were special to the Day of Atonement?
6. Why was a fast to afflict their souls appropriate for the Day of Atonement?
7. On what occasions should we afflict our souls?

Divine Rest

8. Enumerate the rests experienced by God's people from the Old Testament through eternity.
9. How can we live a restful Christian life?

Analyzing the Passage

God outlined seven annual feasts observed on three occasions. The Jewish religious year began in the spring, about April. The Passover was held on the fourteenth day of the first month. Since the month began according to the appearance of the new moon, this could be any day of the week. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was held for seven days following the Passover. The Feast of First Fruits was held on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

After seven Sabbaths, fifty days later (counted inclusively), Pentecost (or the Feast of Weeks) was celebrated.

The seventh month, about October, was the most sacred of all months. It was also the first month of the civil year. The Feast of Trumpets was held on the first day. The Day of Atonement was observed on the tenth day. On this day, the high priest sprinkled blood upon the mercy seat in the most holy place, and the scapegoat was let go into the wilderness. The Feast of Tabernacles was observed from the fifteenth to the twenty-second day.

Principles and Applications

Divine Deliverance

1. God's people maintain holy convocations (23:4). As Christ's return nears and the world grows increasingly wicked, godly people feel the need to assemble together more often. See Hebrews 10:25. We should be diligent in attending evening church services. Worshiping in sister congregations when our home congregation has no evening service is spiritually invigorating.
2. The Passover emphasized deliverance from death by shedding of blood (23:5). "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). The apostle John wanted us to know the certainty of salvation by Christ's blood. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).
3. The Feast of Unleavened Bread helped Israel remember their great

deliverance from bondage (23:6). Deuteronomy 16:3 describes unleavened bread as a "bread of affliction." This alludes to their cruel bondage in Egypt but specifically was to help Israel remember the day the Egyptians forced the Israelites to leave in great haste.

4. God's people must live separate and holy lives (23:6). Sin will spread through personal and group life as surely as leaven permeates a lump dough (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Sincerity and truth characterize those who are uncontaminated with sin. If we tolerate sin in our lives, hypocrisy will be needed to cover it up.

Divine Provision

5. The Feast of First Fruits foreshadowed Jesus' resurrection (23:10-11). "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Those who are spiritually risen with Christ are "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18).

6. Pentecost pointed forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit (23:15-19). The Feast of Pentecost celebrated the completion of the wheat harvest. The coming of the Holy Spirit was the completion of God's provision for believers in this life. The wave loaves at Pentecost were baked with leaven. The two loaves could represent the Jews and the Gentiles being brought into one church.

7. Thankfulness for God's provision overflows into generosity to the needy (23:22). The Feast of Pentecost included offering a freewill offering to the Lord. This was a time of rejoicing to be shared with the servants, Levites, strangers, fatherless, and widows (Deuteronomy 16:11). Do we willingly share machinery and other assets in the brotherhood? Do we charge for everything we do? Do we have a giving or a getting mentality?

Divine Redemption

8. The Feast of Trumpets prefigured the return of Christ (23:24-25). The whole world will hear the last trump. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

9. Men need to repent in godly sorrow for sin to receive God's provision for reconciliation (23:27-28). The Day of Atonement was more a fast

than a feast—a day of soul affliction. How deeply have we grieved for our sins?

John the Baptist and Jesus both came preaching, "Repent [ye]: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The kingdom of heaven cannot be experienced except by those who walk in true repentance.

Divine Rest

10. The Feast of Tabernacles illustrated the present and future rest of God's people (23:34, 36, 42). Dwelling in booths was an object lesson by contrast. Remembering the wilderness wanderings would produce thankfulness for their rest in Canaan. Hebrews 4 tells us that the Old Testament spoke of a rest greater than Canaan. This rest has several aspects—rest in Christ's finished work, rest from the struggle to appease the conscience by works, and finally rest in heaven from the effects of sin.

Important Teachings

1. God's people maintain holy convocations (23:4).
2. The Passover emphasized deliverance from death by shedding of blood (23:5).
3. The Feast of Unleavened Bread helped Israel remember their great deliverance from bondage (23:6).
4. God's people must live separate and holy lives (23:6).
5. The Feast of First Fruits foreshadowed Jesus' resurrection (23:10-11).
6. Pentecost pointed forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit (23:15-19).
7. Thankfulness for God's provision overflows into generosity to the needy (23:22).
8. The Feast of Trumpets prefigured the return of Christ (23:24-25).
9. Men need to repent in godly sorrow for sin to receive God's provision for reconciliation (23:27-28).
10. The Feast of Tabernacles illustrated the present and future rest of
11. Pentecost foreshadowed the believer's experience in the New Testament church (23:15-20).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did God design that His people gather together often?
God knows our needs. Holy convocations provide fellowship, teaching,

encouragement, and the development of friendship. They promote unity and stability.

2. What truths were kept alive by the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

God's salvation for His people was provided by the shedding of blood. God's judgment on the world and His deliverance of His people is thorough and complete. Sin, if left unchecked, will spread and destroy the spiritual life of persons and groups.

3. Why should God receive an offering of first fruits?

God is the Creator, Owner, Sustainer, and Provider of all things. To give God an offering of first fruits acknowledged God's possession of all. The first of a crop also symbolized the best. God deserves the best. This feast helped the Israelites to give God first place in their lives.

4. How does Pentecost especially typify New Testament truth?

The two loaves could signify the Jews and the Gentiles in the church. The comparison between Pentecost (fifty days) and the Year of Jubilee (fifty years) suggests that the number fifty stands for the liberty of the Spirit.

5. What events were special to the Day of Atonement?

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the most holy place and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat. Also on this day, the scapegoat was let go into the wilderness, signifying the carrying of sins into the land of forgetfulness.

6. Why was a fast to afflict their souls appropriate for the Day of Atonement?

The provision for our salvation is divine. For man's part, repentance is required to receive forgiveness from God. In the New Testament era, not only should we experience sorrow for our sins, but we should also be moved by the sorrow Jesus experienced for our sake.

7. On what occasions should we afflict our souls?

We should sorrow for individuals who lose out with God. One soul is worth more than the whole world. We should grieve concerning apostasy among God's people. We should understand the weighty effects of our nation's decay. Our life should be a sober life. We should not be looking for fun and frivolity.

8. Enumerate the rests experienced by God's people from the Old Testament through eternity.

Israel experienced rest in Canaan, provided by Joshua. In the New Testament era, we experience rest through the forgiveness of sin by Christ's finished work. We no longer struggle to appease the conscience by doing many things. We look forward to rest in heaven from all the effects of sin.

9. How can we live a restful Christian life?

We live a restful Christian life because we are satisfied and fulfilled in Christ. We do not need new forms of church life or new forms of religious expression. We know and appreciate the examples of those gone before. The screen with its fast, jumping movements militates against Christian rest.

Contentment with God's natural provisions frees us from the drive for more and more goods. Satisfaction with few things will help us crucify the carnal desire for more and more technology.

Summarizing the Lesson

The life of the believer is a continual feast kept in freedom from the leaven of malice and wickedness.

The greatest feast of the Lord is yet to come—the marriage supper of the Lamb. "His wife hath made herself ready."

Research Guide

1. Read *Thus Shalt Thou Serve*, by C. W. Slemming.
2. Scripture to compare: Deuteronomy 16.
3. Compare New Testament fulfillments: Passover (23:5; cf. John 1:29); Feast of Unleavened Bread (23:6-8; Exodus 13:8-9; cf. Matthew 26:26; Hebrews 10:5; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8); Feast of First Fruits (23:9-14; cf. Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:20); Feast of Pentecost (23:15-21; cf. Acts 1:4); Feast of Trumpets (23:23-25; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53); Day of Atonement (23:26-32; cf. Zechariah 12:2); Feast of Tabernacles (23:33-36, 39-44; cf. Revelation 21:3).