

# The Complete Bible Study Series

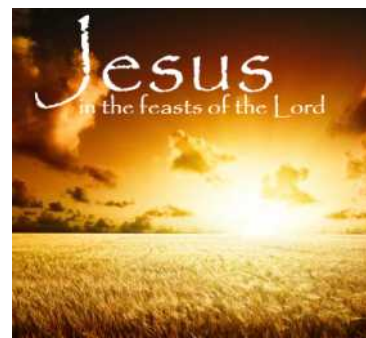
## Jesus in the Feasts of the Lord

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# Jesus in the 7 Feasts of the Lord: An Introduction and Overview

This is the introduction to the introduction to the Seven Feasts of the Lord... if that makes sense! So let me ask you a question as we begin: When is the last time you did a study on the Feasts of the Lord? When is the last time you heard a sermon on them or read a book about them? For the majority of Christians I think it is fair to say that some common answers could well include the words 'long time', 'never' or 'what feasts?' If you are a student of Bible prophecy then the answer could, or should, be different. I think all Christians will have heard something about the feasts for, at the very least, all Christians should be familiar with the terms Passover and Pentecost (which of course are two of the feasts).

Let me just say right from the start here that the feasts which God gave to the nation of Israel (and are often called the feasts of Israel) are incredible in their truth about Jesus and for their prophetic revelation concerning God's plan to redeem and retake this planet. I thought I had a good understanding of the feasts before I did a recent study on them... but I was wrong! My understanding was very limited compared to what I discovered! So whether you think you know the feasts well and hardly at all, I can honestly say that this is a very important topic to study once again. It is one that will only become all the more important as we edge closer to the return of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of these feasts.

Now, this is simply an overview and introduction to the series. Following this I will do a separate study on each of the seven feasts. But let's start with a series of questions to get the grey matter firing (or maybe misfiring as the case may be!)

## Questions, questions, questions...

Let's start with some general questions and then I'll give the answers. For the sake of not crushing your confidence too early, we'll start off pretty easy and leave some tougher ones for later : )

### Feast of the Lord Questions

1. What nation or people were the feasts given to?
2. In the Bible, who came up with the idea of having feasts?
3. In the Bible, when was the first mention of any of the feasts?
4. How many feasts were there?
5. Can you name all the feasts in order?
6. In terms of the timing of these feasts, are they split in any way?
7. What is the spiritual purpose in giving the feasts?
8. What does the split timing of the feasts teach us about the Messiah's work of redemption?
9. Are believers told to keep the feasts today?
10. What should we focus on as we study these feasts?

That will be enough questions for now. Have you given it some thought?<sup>1</sup> Now for the answers!

## Some answers to questions you may not have been asking...

In giving these answers, I will also try to add a few related thoughts where appropriate.

### Feast of the Lord Answers

#### **1. What nation or people were the feasts given to?**

**Leviticus 23:1-2** The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, (2) "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...

The feasts were given to the nation of Israel, as part of their law, to be celebrated each year. Thus they are often called the feasts of Israel. They were not given to any other nation nor were they given to the Church. But, as "the Lord's appointed times", we can learn a great deal from them as we shall see.

#### **2. In the Bible, who came up with the idea of having feasts?**

From the above scripture we can see that they came from God. Moses wrote them down and instructed the sons of Israel as directed by God. With God, things are precise and perfect and as we shall see, so is the fulfillment of these feasts!

### **3. In the Bible, when was the first mention of any of the feasts?**

The first mention is when Israel as a nation was preparing to leave Egypt in the Exodus. This is where God first taught about the 'Passover' and 'Unleavened Bread' as mentioned in Exodus 12. After that the full instruction for all the feasts were given by God to Moses when the law was given at Sinai.

### **4. How many feasts were there?**

As mentioned earlier, what God does is perfect so you won't go far wrong if you say it must be God's perfect number, seven! The nation of Israel had other feasts that became part of the culture throughout their history (such as Purim, the feast of Lots, celebrating the victory won in the book of Esther) but there are seven feasts specifically given by God to Moses as indicated in Leviticus chapter 23.

### **5. Can you name all the feasts in order? (And if that is too easy for you, do it in Hebrew!)**

In English followed by the Hebrew names in brackets:

Passover (Pesach), Unleavened Bread (Hag Hamatzot), Firstfruits (Hag HaBikkurim), Pentecost or Weeks (Shavuot), Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), Atonement (Yom Kippur), Tabernacles (Succoth).

### **6. In terms of the timing of these feasts, are they split in any way?**

The feasts are split into two groups that can be summarised as the spring and autumn (fall) feasts. The four spring feasts are Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. The autumn feasts are Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles. There is a gap of roughly four months in between the last of the spring feasts (Pentecost) and the first of the autumn feasts (Trumpets).

### **7. What is the spiritual purpose in giving the feasts?**

At a natural level each of the feasts celebrated some aspect of Jewish history. But God has given them for a far greater reason than that. God has given these feasts to foretell in advance the work of His Son, Jesus Christ, in specific relation to His death, resurrection and return. Simply put, these feasts are amazing! They are absolutely specific even giving the exact days of the year in which these events will occur. They are God's calendar for the order and details of the most significant events in the history of the world!

### **8. What does the split timing of the feasts teach us about the Messiah's work of redemption?**

This is a fascinating aspect of the feasts. As mentioned there are four feasts in the spring and three in the autumn with a four month gap in between. This separation signifies the two comings of Jesus Christ. All of the spring feasts were fulfilled EXACTLY in Jesus' first coming 2000 years ago. These feasts deal with the death and resurrection of Christ as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit. This has all been fulfilled. The later autumn feasts all deal with the events at the end of the age including the rapture and resurrection, the second coming of Christ and the long awaited Messianic Kingdom on earth. Combined these feasts speak of the total work of Christ to redeem mankind and this planet. And it is all laid out in advance!

### **9. Are believers in Christ told to keep the feasts today?**

This is also an interesting question. The church is not under any law to outwardly keep the feasts as the nation of Israel was told to do. In fact there are verses of warning when believers go back under these and other aspects of the law in an attempt to win favour and righteousness with God. This is what the Galatian church tried to do and note Paul's concern and disappointment with them:

**Galatians 4:9-11** But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? (10) You observe days and months and seasons and years. (11) I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

To those at Colossae Paul wrote:

**Colossians 2:16-17** Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. (17) These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

So we are not under any legal obligation to keep the feasts (festivals) because they were a shadow of the reality that is in Christ. But as 'shadows' or 'types' we can certainly learn from them for God has hidden many important truths within them. It should also be noted that there is a spiritual way in which we still keep these feasts and this spiritual / personal aspect will also be explored as we continue with our studies. It was this spiritual (not natural / outward) that Paul spoke about when he wrote:

**1 Corinthians 5:7-8** 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. (8) 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.

**10. What should we focus on as we study these feasts?**

We read above that the feasts / festivals were 'shadows' of the reality that is in Christ. So this is what we should focus on - the reality in Christ. We are not trying to learn so that we have more knowledge for knowledge sake. We are trying to learn more about Jesus Christ and our life in Him. Studying all the minute details that the Jews did outwardly at these feasts is only helpful to the extent that it can be applied to one of the following aspects:

- 1) The Messianic significance: This is the work of Jesus Christ at His first coming as well as what He will do leading up to His return and kingdom rule.
- 2) The personal significance: This is the spiritual outworking of the truth of these feasts into our lives today. These two points combined are summed up in that term 'the reality that is in Christ'. That will be our focus.

## So what exactly is a 'feast' then?

**Leviticus 23:2** Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.

There are two important words that we need to concentrate on in this passage that will help answer what exactly a feast is. The first is 'feast' and the second is 'assemblies' (or 'convocations' in some other versions.) If you are like me, when you hear 'feast' you think 'food'... and possibly/hopefully lots of it. But that isn't what this word means. The Hebrew word is 'mo'ed' which means 'an appointment, that is, a fixed time or season; specifically a festival'. The second interesting word is 'assemblies' or 'convocations'. The Hebrew word used is 'miqra' which means 'something called out, that is, a public meeting.' But it also has the thought of 'a rehearsal'. **So God was setting up a 'fixed time' during the year when the nation of Israel would be 'called out' to gather together, every year, to 'rehearse' future coming events.** God would get them to rehearse this year after year after year... And whatever it is that they had to rehearse for centuries on end it must be important!

So let me ask you: If you had all the events of mankind's history to chose from, which seven events would you choose as the most important to celebrate each year?<sup>2</sup> What we find is that each of the feasts find their fulfillment in the life of the Messiah Jesus and God's plan to redeem this world! Specifically, the feasts center in on the Messiah's death, burial and resurrection, the Holy Spirit's indwelling, the rapture and resurrection of believers, the second coming of Christ and finally the coming Messianic Kingdom. Great stuff! Let's have a look at a brief overview of what is taught in each feast.

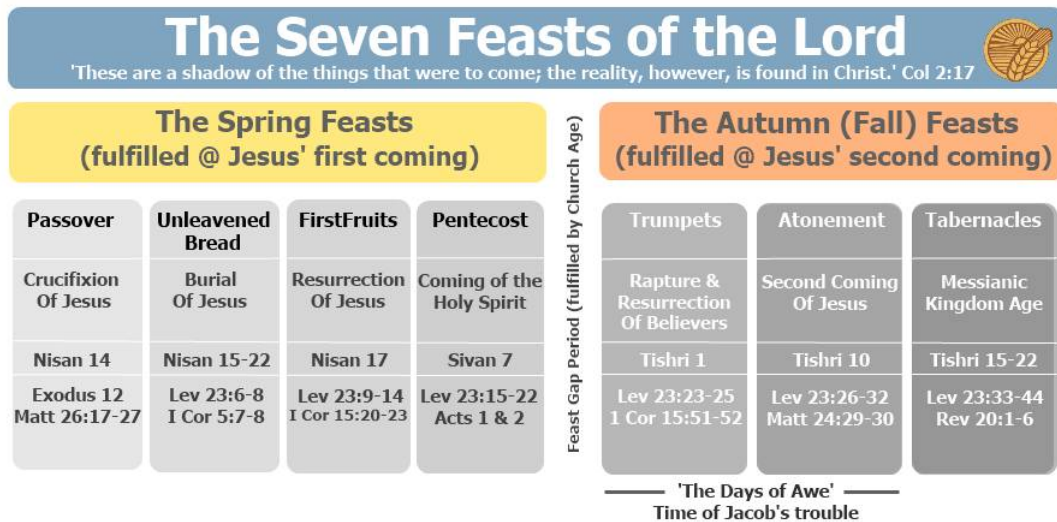
## Overview of the feasts

Each of the seven feasts has a historical, Messianic and personal significance associated with them. This is displayed in the following table:

Feast / Date	Historical Significance	Messianic Significance	Personal Significance
Passover Nisan 14	Freedom from the slavery of Egypt. Lamb slain and blood applied	Jesus' death as the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world	Redemption: Our deliverance from this world into the family of God through faith in the Son of God
Unleavened Bread Nisan 15-22	Exodus in haste from Egypt	Jesus' sinless life and his burial	Sanctification: Our walk with God - being free from the leaven of sin that corrupts

Firstfruits Day after Sabbath following Passover	Firstfruits of the harvest. Celebrates the crossing of the Red Sea	Jesus' resurrection from the dead as the firstfruits of the New Creation	Consecration: Living in newness of life as a New Creation in Christ and offering ourselves back to Him.
Pentecost 50 days after firstfruits	Remembering the giving of the law (Torah) on Sinai	The coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers	Dependence: Walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and following the law of the spirit of life
Trumpets Tishri 1-2	Jewish New Year. Celebrates the creation of the world	The rapture and resurrection of believers Crowning of King Jesus	Watchful/Warfare: Living in view of His imminent return. Being watchful and ready.
Day of Atonement Tishri 10	Holiest Day and national forgiveness	The second coming of Christ in power. National day of atonement and forgiveness for Israel.	Repentance: Before the Lord and yielding ourselves up to Him.
Tabernacles Tishri 15-22	Celebration in coming into the Promised Land.	The 1000 year Messianic Kingdom on Earth.	Rest: Living in the rest and joy that is in Christ in our daily lives today

Or, to display it a little differently, here is a chart that shows the order, separation and prophetic significance of each feast.



## Conclusion

So as we move forward with these studies we will examine what we can learn from:

- The Biblical account of the feasts
- Aspects of the Jewish observance of each feast
- The Messianic / prophetic significance of the feasts
- The personal spiritual reality of each feast today

Now it should be said nice and clearly that I am by no means an expert in this. It seems the more you study this topic the more it opens and reveals new revelation! So I have definitely 'not arrived' and nor will I. I am simply learning about these highly significant Jewish feasts and trying to pass on some of the interesting little 'nuggests'. I have very much enjoyed studying this topic and have been amazed at what God has hidden in 'the feasts of the Lord'!

Finally I want to mention a couple of books that have helped in this topic which I will be quoting from occasionally.

- *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah* - Edward Chumney (this is a very detailed book which will be very useful if you want to study this topic in a lot more detail.)
- *Unlocking the secrets of the Feasts* - Michael Norton (a smaller, quicker read but with some interesting information)
- *After the Rapture* - Jerry L. Dart (a very comprehensive book on Bible prophecy/end times in general but includes useful information on the 'days of awe' between the feast of Trumpets and the day of Atonement.)

- I have also read smaller pamphlets on the Feasts by Jewish believers Arnold Fructenbaum and Zola Levitt which were useful.

## Appendix – Jewish Holy Days: The Making of a Baby

In 1979 Zola Levitt published a booklet called 'The Seven Feasts of Israel'. Part 2 of the booklet was a fascinating account of how the feasts relate to the development of the baby in the womb. Yes, you read that right! The following is an overview of Levitt's findings written by J.R Church. I think you'll find it as amazing as I did as it testifies to the One who designed both!

“Zola Levitt discovered an amazing correlation between Jewish Holy Days and the gestation of a human baby, from conception to birth. While preparing for writing a book for new parents, Zola contacted a gynecologist for some help in understanding gestation. During that session, the gynecologist showed him a series of pictures, pointed to the first one (an egg and a sperm) and said, "On the fourteenth day of the first month, the egg appears." The statement struck a chord in his Jewish mind because that was the date of Passover. He remembered the roasted egg on his family table every Passover. Now, for the first time, he knew what it meant! Not wanting to lead the gynecologist off from the subject at hand, he didn't say anything, but continued to listen.

The gynecologist continued: "The egg must be fertilized within 24 hours, or it will pass on." This reminded Zola of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the seed or grain that "fell into the ground and died" in order to produce a harvest, the firstfruits of which was presented to God. Next, the gynecologist said, "Within two to six days, the fertilized egg attaches itself to the wall of the womb and begins to grow." And, sure enough, the Jewish evangelist thought, "The Feast of Firstfruits is observed anywhere from two to six days after Passover!"

Next, he was shown a photo of an embryo showing arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet, toes, a head, eyes, etc. The caption said, "Fifty days." The gynecologist continued, "Around the fiftieth day, the embryo takes on the form of a human being. Until then, we don't know if we have a duck or a tadpole." Zola thought, "That's Pentecost!"

The next picture showed the embryo at seven months. The gynecologist said, "On the first day of the seventh month, the baby's hearing is developed. For the first time, it can hear and distinguish sounds outside the womb." Zola knew that was the date for the Jewish Festival of Trumpets.

The gynecologist continued, "On the tenth day of the seventh month, the hemoglobin of the blood changes from that of the mother, to a self-sustaining baby." Zola thought, "That's the Day of Atonement, when the blood was taken into the Holy of holies!"

Next, the gynecologist said, "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the lungs become fully developed. If born before then, the baby would have a hard time breathing." And Zola thought, "That's the festival of Tabernacles, a time of celebrating the Temple, home of the Shekinah glory or Spirit of God." In the New Testament, the Greek term *pneuma*, normally translated as "breath," is applied to the "Holy Spirit."

Birth takes place on the tenth day of the ninth month. Eight days after birth, in Jewish families, a son is circumcised. Zola noted that the eight days of Hanukkah are celebrated right on schedule, nine months and ten days after Passover.

No human being could have understood the gestation period 3,500 years ago. The establishment of the Jewish Holy Days was given to Moses by Jehovah, Himself. Its correlation with the human gestation period is not only remarkable; it proves "Intelligent Design." It proves the existence of an intelligence beyond this world. It proves that there is a Creator God that guides the affairs of man.

# 1. The Sacrifice – Jesus in the Feast of Passover

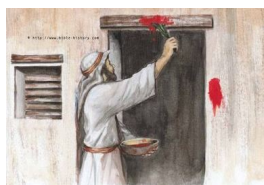
As we saw in the introduction to this series, God has selected seven different events in the history of the world for the nation of Israel to rehearse year upon year through the observance of a feast. God instructed Israel to keep specific feasts at key appointed times throughout the year as a lasting ordinance. Now let me say that these feasts are amazing in the clear portrayal of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and the events surrounding His return. The first feast that we will study is Passover. It is interesting that God didn't give a feast concerning the birth of Jesus or even his earthly ministry... the first feast goes right to the heart of Christianity with His death – the cross and crucifixion of Christ. In this study, and in subsequent studies in this series, we will look at the Biblical passages concerning each feast as well as examining what we can learn from the Jewish observance of each feast. For each feast we will explore the Messianic significance of the feast as well as what we can learn for our own personal lives. Let's dive right in to this very interesting Bible study topic!

## Background to the exodus

The nation of Israel had been down in Egypt for 430 years (**Exo 12:40–41**). While it started fine while Joseph was alive, the subsequent generations of Israelites became slaves to the Egyptians. As their bondage increased and their cries came before Heaven, God remembered the promises that He had made to their fathers – the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of a great nation with a land of their own. And so, in the fullness of time, God instructed Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. But that was easier said than done for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was not about to let them go. His heart was hardened and he wanted to keep the Israelites enslaved. So a series of judgments were brought against Egypt but still Pharaoh would not relent. Finally, through the Passover (and the death of every firstborn male child in Egypt) Pharaoh relented and let them go. Well, for a while anyway! But that part of the story can await another study!

It is interesting to see even in this background how this historical event is also a picture of the believers salvation. Egypt is a type of the world. Just as Egypt was under the control of Pharaoh so this world lies in the power of Satan, the evil one. (**1 John 5:19**) The slavery of the Israelites in Egypt pictures the slavery to sin that imprisons those in the world (**John 8:34**). Just as Pharaoh was not about to let go of his slaves, so Satan will do all he can to hold onto those who haven't yet seen the truth (**2 Cor 4:4**). But there is hope! Just as God provided a way of escape for the Israelites through the blood of the 'Passover Lamb' so there is salvation today in the one who is the true Lamb of God – Jesus Christ. So let's explore God's way of escape through the Passover.

## What does the Bible say about the Passover?



So let's look at this way of escape. Let's look at how the Israelites were able to escape the clutches of Pharaoh and how believers today are freed from their debt and slavery to sin. The historical account of this is given in Exodus 12.

(See also an **earlier look at the Passover here** if interested.)

We'll look at each verse and add some thoughts on how this is fulfilled from both a Messianic and personal application. The Messianic application is obviously what Jesus did to fulfil this feast. The personal aspect is how we appropriate and apply this truth.

Verse	Messianic Fulfillment / Personal Application
<b>Exodus 12:1–2</b> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, (2) This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.	God changes Israel's calendar to make this month, the month of Nisan, their first. To this day the nation of Israel has both a civil and religious calendar that have different start and end points. <sup>3</sup> Now why would God do that? Simply put, from a spiritual point of view everything starts at the Passover. When someone believes in Jesus as the lamb that was sacrificed for their sin, they are born again and are a new creation. It is a whole new beginning for them as a child of God. It all starts here and that is what God wants to emphasise. Have you experienced that? There is a new

<p><b>Exodus 12:3</b> Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.</p>	<p>This verse shows how the Passover affects EVERYONE. The whole community of Israel had to be involved. 'Each man' had to take a lamb for their household. God doesn't have a plan B here. This is His way and it affects everyone. We will see later that this process really was, quite literally, a matter of life and death. Note also that it was on the 10th of Nisan that the lamb was taken. In direct fulfillment of this, Nisan 10 was the day that Jesus presented Himself to Israel by riding into Jerusalem on a foal of a donkey.</p>
<p><b>Exodus 12:4</b> If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.</p>	<p>There was not to be any of the lamb left over - it had to be fully consumed. So if a household was too small to finish the entire lamb they could join with their neighbours. The Rabbi's would later declare that a lamb should be for 10 or more people but no more than 20. So a single family may be insufficient for a lamb but the lamb would never be insufficient for the family! This verse drives home the point how Jesus, as the true lamb of God, would give all. It would not be a partial sacrifice and He would pay for all sins and be 'fully consumed'.</p>
<p><b>Exodus 12:5</b> The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.</p>	<p>The animal was to be a male without defect. In terms of the fulfillment of this being a male, the letter of Romans tells us that '...For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!' (<b>Romans 5:15</b>) But notice also that the scripture had to be fulfilled by a male that was without defect... and they are not so easy to come by! Well, in all of human history this planet has only seen one. Peter tells us that believers have been redeemed 'with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.' (<b>1 Pet 1:19</b>)</p>
<p><b>Exodus 12:6</b> Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.</p>	<p>The people were to keep, care and inspect their lamb from the 10th of Nisan until the 14th. It would then be killed at twilight. The Bible Knowledge commentary says that 'twilight' is between the sun's decline and sunset (3-5pm). In direct fulfillment of this, Jesus died on the 14th of Nisan at this exact time, 3pm, while that nation of Israel was beginning the process of killing their lambs.<sup>4</sup> Notice also in the passage how all the people had to slaughter their lamb.<sup>5</sup> This shows us that all were involved in Jesus' death. Not just the Jews, not just the Romans... He died for your sin and mine. We all played a part.</p>
<p><b>Exodus 12:7</b> Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.</p>	<p>With the lamb dead, the people then had to do two things: 1) They had to apply the blood onto the doorframes of their house and 2) they had to eat the lamb. Jesus Christ died for everyone but not everyone applies the results of His death to their life. <b>John 6:53-54</b> So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. (54) "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.' We apply the affects of His death by believing in Him and His work on our behalf, by receiving Him into our life and by feeding on His word.</p>
<p><b>Exodus 12:8</b> That same night they are to eat the meat roasted</p>	<p>It had to be eaten the same night for God's judgment and wrath poured out upon Jesus would be complete on that same day - the 14th Nisan. Notice also that it was eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The bitter herbs reminded the Israelites of the bitterness they</p>



over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast (leaven).

experienced in their life of slavery in Egypt. In like manner it reminds the believer of what their life was like before knowing the Lord. The unleavened bread reminds us that Jesus was sinless and that we are now 'unleavened' in Him (**1 Cor 5:7**). It also reminds us of the ongoing need for a holy walk.

**Exodus 12:9-10** Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire-- head, legs and inner parts. (10) Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it.

The lamb could not be eaten raw or boiled. It had to be roasted with fire. Fire speaks of the judgment of God (**Mal 3:1-5, 4:1-3, Matt 3:12**) which would consume the lamb of God upon the cross. Any of the lamb that was left had to be fully burned. Again this is pointing to the fact that Jesus' judgment was complete. The fires of God's wrath burned out upon the cross for all those that will place their trust in Him. But wrath remains for those that will not believe. **John 3:36** "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

**Exodus 12:11** This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

For the Israelites, the Passover was eaten in haste because they were to quickly leave Egypt and embark on their journey to the Promised Land. This has its fulfillment in the life of the believer today. We also should realise that believing and partaking of Christ begins a whole new journey. We are not to stay where we were in worldly thoughts and actions. The sandals should be on our feet and the staff in our hand for the new life is before us.

**Exodus 12:12** On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.

For those in Egypt, who didn't have the blood applied over their household, God would strike down the firstborn of both men and animals. Why the firstborn you ask? In the Bible the firstborn often speaks of our natural, fleshly birth in comparison to our second 'spiritual' birth.<sup>6</sup> The point is that we must be born again. The world is under the judgment of God. But there is away of escape provided by God Himself!

**Exodus 12:13** The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

In the days of the Exodus, the angel of death came and 'passed over' any that had the blood over their door frames. But death came to those that weren't under the blood. Please note that this salvation from the angel of death didn't come down to personal worthiness. The angel didn't go inside the house and see whether the inhabitants were worthy through their own righteousness to be spared. No! It just came down to whether they had believed God and followed that by eating the lamb and applying its blood as he had commanded. It is the same today. The provision of salvation is there to be accepted by grace through faith. It doesn't come down to personal worthiness. Only the Lamb is worthy! But we must follow God's way of salvation and not our own!

**Exodus 12:14** This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the

God wanted this day to be celebrated as a lasting ordinance among the children of Israel. Each year, between the 10th and 14th of Nisan this feast was celebrated. But also remember that is a rehearsal. It is a shadow of the reality that is in Christ. It is a pointer to the true Passover - the Lord Jesus Christ - the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.<sup>7</sup>

## Jewish Observance

'Seder' (meaning order, arrangement) is the name given to the Jewish traditional observance of the Passover feast. The 'Seder' is generally a fifteen step process<sup>8</sup> of celebrating the Passover and feast of Unleavened Bread. One aspect I want to draw your attention to today is the four cups of wine that are used in the ceremony. Edward Chumney in his book 'The seven festivals of the Messiah' writes:

“During the course of the Seder, the four cups of wine that are served to the people present at the Seder are used in the following manner, and are called:

1. The cup of blessing (**Luke 22:17; 1 Corinthians 10:16**). This cup is called the cup of sanctification, or the Kiddush.
2. The cup of wrath (**Luke 22:42-44**). This cup is not drunk, but is poured out on the table as the plagues of Egypt are recited. Yeshua drank of this cup for us in the Garden of Gethsemane and when He died on the tree.
3. The cup of blessing, salvation, or redemption. This cup is filled to overflowing, symbolizing an overflowing salvation (**Psalms 116:13**).
4. The cup of the kingdom (**Luke 22:18,20; Matthew 26:28-29**). Yeshua spoke of eating and drinking afresh in the Messianic age with His disciples after His resurrection.'

I found this very interesting and it certainly sheds more light on 'the last supper' where Jesus wouldn't drink of the cup of the kingdom<sup>9</sup>:

**Luke 22:15-20** And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; (16) for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (17) And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; (18) for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." (19) 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." (20) 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.



It also shed more light upon the 'cup of wrath' that He alone had to drink. As noted above, this is a cup that is poured out. Thank God again that all those that have come to know Jesus as their Passover Lamb, will not drink from God's cup of wrath. For us, it can be poured out and missed. But Jesus did drink of this cup on our behalf. This was the cup that He asked, if it were possible, might be taken from Him. Yet, even in the midst of facing such incredible difficulty, He again won the victory by finishing His prayer with the words 'yet not my will, but yours be done'. (**Luke 22:42-44**)

## Always time for one last hymn... Especially this one!

**Matthew 26:30** After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Bible says that at the end of the last supper, on Passover, Jesus and the disciples finished by singing a hymn and then went out to the Mount of Olives. When we think 'hymns' some beauties may come to mind like 'Amazing grace' or 'Be thou my vision'. But for the Jews, they think 'the Psalms'. On the feast days (most notably Passover and Tabernacles) the Jews would sing the 'Hallel' which is Psalms 113-118. They would close with Psalm 118 so it is likely that this was the Psalm sung by Jesus and His disciples as they finished their Passover together for the final time. Why is that interesting you ask? Well, it is interesting due to the content of the Psalm. And one final point before reading this part of this song - we need to remember that it wasn't just Jesus and the disciples singing this... it was all of Israel singing this Psalm during this special day of Passover. They were all declaring it at the top of the lungs! It is a song that the vast majority of Israel, with blinded eyes and hardened hearts, had no idea as to what they were saying at the time of Jesus' first coming. But it also foretells of a day when they will see the meaning of what they sang!

**Psalms 118:21** I shall give thanks to You, for You have answered me, And You have become my salvation.

The Hebrew word for 'salvation' is 'Yeshua' - which is Jesus' name in Hebrew. The song thanks Yeshua (Jesus) for becoming my salvation.



**Psalms 118:22-25** The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone. (23) This is the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes. (24) This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it. (25) O LORD, do save, we beseech You; O LORD, we beseech You, do send prosperity!

At this time of Passover they sung that the stone that the builders rejected (which is Jesus, **Mat 21:42**) has become the chief corner stone! And it is marvelous in our eyes! Again, they had no idea what they were singing at the time of Jesus' death on the cross but one day this Psalm will be sung and believed by Israel!

**Psalms 118:26** *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.*

This is a Messianic title. They sung this to Jesus at His 'triumphant entry' but still rejected Him 4 days later. Jesus said that Israel would have to say this once more before they would see Him again (**Mat 23:39**). This will happen in the days leading up to the return of Jesus.

**Psalms 118:27** *The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.*

It is amazing that all of Israel would have been singing 'bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar' at the same time that Jesus was being nailed and possibly tied to the cross. And yet they didn't understand the truth that God had ordained for them to sing at this time.

## Conclusion

We have looked briefly at the first of seven feasts that God has ordained and have seen that it is directly fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf. As noted, each verse in the Exodus 12 account of the Passover has direct relevance for Jesus and our life today. Chumney notes that

“Passover ( *Pesach* ) has been given by the rabbis the appropriate title of the "Feast of our Freedom !!!"'

And so it is. Everything starts with the Passover. But this is only the beginning... The next feast we will look at is that of Unleavened Bread and believe me when I say that it is equally as instructive and enlightening! God has given us His feasts as a prophetic insight into the work of the Lord Jesus Christ so we would do well to pay attention to them!

## 2. The Burial – Jesus in the feast of Unleavened Bread

This is the second Bible study in a series on the seven feasts of the Lord that God has given us in His word. We saw last time how Jesus is pictured in the feast of Passover. He is the true Passover Lamb. The feast before us today is tied to the first and in practice Unleavened Bread is simply an extension of the feast of Passover. Now like the first feast, there are some really interesting things to learn about the Lord in both the Biblical account and the Jewish observance of this feast. So let's start with the Biblical account.

### The Biblical Commands for Unleavened Bread

**Exodus 12:15–20** For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. (16) On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat—that is all you may do. (17) **Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.** (18) In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. (19) For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. (20) Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

**Leviticus 23:5–8** The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. (6) **On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins;** for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. (7) On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. (8) For seven days present an offering made to the LORD by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work."

The feast of Unleavened Bread was a festival that begun on the day after Passover (ie the 15th Nisan) and lasted for seven days. Historically speaking, this feast was a celebration of the exodus in haste from Egypt. The title of the feast gives the game away in terms of what was the major feature of this feast – it was a time of eating unleavened bread. In fact, the Biblical command given above is for each household to search and remove any leaven that may be in the house. So the question needs to be asked: Why has God got it in for leaven? What is so wrong with having leaven in the house during this time or in eating bread that includes leaven? Well? What's so wrong with that? I think a short detour concerning leaven in the Bible is called for...

### The A B C's of leaven

Leaven, or yeast, is a fungus that ferments sugars and is used to cause dough to rise. Easton's Bible commentary states *'The use of leaven was strictly forbidden in all offerings made to the Lord by fire (Lev 2:11; Lev 7:12; Lev 8:2; Num 6:15). Its secretly penetrating and diffusive power is referred to in 1Cor 5:6... It is a figure also of corruptness and of perverseness of heart and life (Mat 16:6, Mat 16:11; Mar 8:15; 1Cor 5:7, 1Cor 5:8).'*

It is worth looking again at how the Bible uses the imagery of leaven. Let's start with a general scripture that defines its overall usage and then we'll get more specific.

**1 Corinthians 5:6–8** Your boasting is not good. **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?** (7) **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. (8) 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.**

It is clear that leaven is used in the general sense as a type for sin. It is used of this because of its properties of spreading and influencing everything around it. And even a little bit can have a big impact! As the Apostle Paul states, in speaking of the sin that the Corinthians allowed, 'do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?' If we were going to be more specific, I would draw your attention to five specific sins that are mentioned in connection with leaven. Three of these are spoken by Christ and two by the Apostle Paul. Let's have a look:

**Beware of the following types of leaven**

- **The leaven of the Pharisees: *Matthew 16:6*** *And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees..."* While Jesus doesn't define the sin of the Pharisees in the Matthew passage we don't have to be in the dark as to what it was for it is the overwhelming characteristic of the Pharisees and it is clearly stated for us in **Luke 12:1** which states *'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.'* This is the first leaven to beware of. Hypocrisy – saying one thing and doing another – putting on a religious show outwardly when your heart is far from God.
- **The leaven of the Sadducees: *Matthew 16:6*** *And Jesus said to them, "Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Sadducees."* The Pharisees were known for their religiosity and hypocrisy but the Sadducees had a different problem. They were known for their reluctance to believe in the supernatural. They didn't believe in angels or in the resurrection (**Luke 20:27-38**). They were the spiritual skeptics of their age while maintaining a show of religion.<sup>10</sup>
- **The leaven of Herod: *Mark 8:15*** *And He was giving orders to them, saying, "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of... Herod."* Herod is an interesting case. He was in a position of worldly power but also desired to see Jesus so that he could see a sign. There are several warnings here. One is against the desire for worldliness and power that can easily spread and unfortunately, looking at the Western church today, we see so much of this leaven. But the other warning is in combining this through seeking signs and wonders in attempting to gain greater power. Does that one ring any bells today?<sup>11</sup>
- **The leaven of legalism: *Galatians 5:7-9*** *You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? (8) This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. (9) A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.* The problem in the Galatian church was that they started with faith and Jesus plus nothing but were soon persuaded that they needed to add aspects of the law (like observing certain days, circumcision, righteousness by works etc). So their faith became Jesus plus... Paul instructed them (in no uncertain terms!) that this was not from God and was in fact a leaven that quickly leavens the whole lump.
- **The leaven of immorality: *1 Corinthians 5:17*** *It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife... (7) 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.* The context of this well known passage in Corinthians concerning leaven is sexual immorality. 1st century Corinth, which is in southern Greece west of Athens, was known unfortunately for an 'anything goes' attitude<sup>12</sup>. It had a reputation for gross immorality. And as we see here it had infiltrated into the Church. Paul correctly identified this as a leaven. The church was following the ways of the culture in which they lived. It was a slippery slope that only headed in one direction. And rapidly. Does this sound familiar? What has happened with sexual immorality in our day? What is the attitude of the church? Does it stay true to what God says in His word or has the leaven started to spread its influence through the church? Unfortunately, to ask the question is to answer it. It is not the job of the church to judge the world. But it is the role of the church to maintain and obey God's word within it. (see Paul's discussion of this straight after the passage quoted above in **1 Cor 5:9-13**.)

## Jesus is the unleavened bread

The unleavened bread speaks of the total sinlessness of Jesus Christ. Do you realise that if Jesus had committed but one sin then He could not have been the sacrifice for our sin? It was a lamb without defect that was sacrificed at Passover and it was bread without leaven that was eaten at the feast of unleavened bread. When you think of all the different ways that a person gets led into sin it is incredible that our Saviour lived His whole life without failing once! But that is what He did. The Bible record is clear on this: *'You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. (1 John 3:5) God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)* Did not Jesus tell us that He is the true bread? He is the unleavened bread on whom we should feed.

**John 6:32-35** Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. (33) For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." (34) Sir, they said, "from now on give us this bread." (35) **Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.**

It is also worth noting that this feast was observed on the 15th Nisan for this is when Jesus was in the tomb having been taken down from the cross and buried late on the 14th Nisan. It all points to Christ! Now let's look at a couple of Jewish observances connected to this feast for they are amazing and full of instruction.

## Jewish Observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: The Personal Application

We read above that the Biblical command concerning the feast of Unleavened Bread was for the Jews to remove any yeast (leaven) from their house. This became a tradition called 'Bedikat HaMetz' (meaning 'the search for leaven'). Chumney gives the details of this tradition as follows:

“*The preparation for searching and removing the leaven from the house actually begins before Passover (Pesach). First, the wife thoroughly cleans the house to remove all leaven from it. In the Bible, leaven is symbolic of sin. In cleaning the house, the wife is instructed to purposely leave ten small pieces of leaven (bread) in the house. Then the father takes the children, along with a candle, a wooden spoon, a feather, and a piece of linen cloth, and searches through the house for the ten pieces of leaven. By nightfall on the day before Passover (Pesach), a final and comprehensive search is performed. At this time, the house is completely dark except for the candles. Once the father finds the leaven (bread), he sets the candle down by the leaven and lays the wooden spoon beside the leaven. Then he uses the feather to sweep the leaven onto the spoon. Without touching the leaven, he takes the feather, spoon, and leaven, wraps them in a linen cloth, and casts them out of the door of the house. The next morning (the fourteenth of Nisan), he goes into the synagogue and puts the linen cloth and its contents into a fire to be burned.*



This is very instructive for our own lives in looking at what the personal aspect of this feast is for us. The house that contains the leaven is a picture of our lives and our bodies – the temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 3:16**). The search for the leaven was a complete 'spring clean' of their entire house to ensure that no leaven had fallen into any little cracks. The candle that illuminates the room in the search for the leaven is a picture of the work of the word of God which is a light unto our path (**Psalms 119:105**). Once the leaven is found, the feather (representing the Holy Spirit who is often pictured as a Dove) sweeps the leaven (sin) onto the wooden spoon (a type of the wooden cross of Christ) which is used to remove the leaven (sin). This is all placed with in linen (the righteousness of Christ) and is judged by fire (representing the judgment that Christ bore in taking away OUR sin.)

**1 Corinthians 5:7-8** Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened.<sup>13</sup> For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. (8) 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.

#### **The outworking of this feast in our lives**

The personal ongoing aspect of this feast is also expressed in the verse above. It speaks of our sanctification or holiness in our walk as Christians. We keep the feast spiritually by removing, through the word of God (the candle) and the work of the Holy Spirit (the feather) any leaven of wickedness and malice. And we feed upon the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. That is how we keep the feast today in a spiritual sense. We walk in truth. We aren't perfect and are not expected to be. But we are to be honest about our condition before God and man acknowledging that without Him, Jesus, we are nothing. We allow the word of God and the Holy Spirit to work in our lives as we remain open and soft towards our Lord. We remain truthful before God acknowledging our sin (leaven) knowing that *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'* **1 John 1:9**

## **An outward example: Jesus clears out the leaven from His Father's house**

As noted above, in preparation for Passover and Unleavened bread the Jews would clear out any and every speck of leaven that were in their homes. So... the question is 'did Jesus do this?' And if so, in what way did He do it? Jesus did do this. He specially cleared out the leaven that was in His Father's house. And note also the timing when this event occurred.

**John 2:13-17** When **it was almost time for the Jewish Passover**, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (14) In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. (15) So he made a whip out of cords, **and drove all from the temple area**, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. (16) To those who sold doves he said, **"Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"** (17) His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

Normally we would read over this without understanding the significance of the approaching Passover but once you understand the command of God to the Israelites to remove any leaven from their homes leading up to the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread, then the significance becomes all the more real. In driving out the money changes and salesmen, Jesus was removing the leaven from His Father's house in preparation for the coming Passover. It certainly makes you wonder what He would think/do to many churches in the West today! Now this event in John 2 occurred early in the ministry of Jesus. But it wasn't the only time that Jesus removed the leaven from His Father's house. In fact, even in the days

leading up to His own death on the cross, Jesus again entered the temple and removed the leaven! This is expressed in the following scripture and follows straight on from the 'triumphant entry' into Jerusalem in that fateful final week.

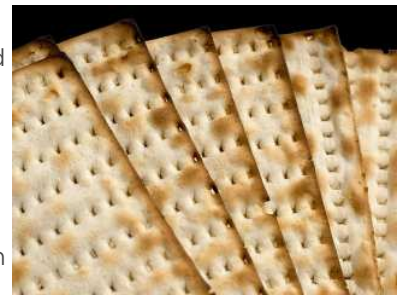
**Matthew 21:10-13** When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" (11) The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee." (12) Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. (13) It is written, he said to them, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.' "

## Jewish Observance of the Feast of Unleavened bread: The Messianic Significance

In learning about the Jewish traditions surrounding each feast I was amazed at the truth that God has packed into each one. But one of the best in my opinion concerns the 'matzah' in the Seder ceremony that we discussed in the previous study on the Passover. Matzah is unleavened flat bread seen below. While there is some mystery surrounding its origin, this wonderful tradition apparently goes back before the time of Christ. So have a read of what the Jews do each and every year at the feasts of Passover and Unleavened bread and then we'll discuss its spiritual meaning and Messianic significance.

### The Matzah and the Messianic Fulfillment

**The ceremony involving the matzah:** As part of the Seder ceremony the leader of the Seder will bring out a linen bag containing three pieces of matzah (flat, unleavened bread that has stripes and has been pierced). The second or middle piece of the three is removed from the bag and is broken. Half of the matzah is then wrapped in a linen cloth and is hidden somewhere in the house. This part is known as the 'afikomen'<sup>14</sup> and it remains hidden until a later part of the ceremony where children are asked to search for the 'afikomen'. The one that finds it is rewarded with a gift and the afikomen is then broken into many pieces and eaten by all that are at the service.



So now it is your time to think! What does this tradition that is replayed year after year and goes back before the time of Christ signify?

**The Matzah Messianic Fulfillment:** The three pieces of unleavened bread (matzah) that are together in one bag speaks of the Godhead - Father, Son and Holy Spirit (**Mat 28:19**). The second piece that is removed from the bag speaks of the second member of the Godhead, Jesus Christ, coming to earth and being found as a man. He is the one that was broken for us at the cross just as the second piece of the matzah was broken. In that the matzah is often pierced and striped, so Jesus was for us. The great prophetic revelation about Jesus Christ foretold this saying 'he was pierced for our transgressions' and 'by his stripes we are healed' (**Isaiah 53:6**). In that the broken matzah was then wrapped in linen signifies the burial of Jesus' body which also was wrapped in linen (**Mark 15:46**). This was then hidden for a time just as Jesus was hidden in the tomb for 3 days and 3 nights. But the children are then asked to search for the matzah just as we are asked to seek Him as little children. To the one that finds the matzah that had been hidden, a gift is given. The same occurs spiritually for all that seek and find Him are given the gift of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38, Eph 4:7-8**). In that everyone in the ceremony is then asked to partake of the matzah that is no longer hidden, so Christ invites all to spiritually partake of Him saying 'I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.' (**John 6:51**)

Isn't that amazing? Isn't it sad that the Jewish people can re-enact this year after year and still be ignorant of what this ceremony truly means? Isn't it going to be amazing when God again fulfills His promise to return, save, and open the eyes of His people Israel? How wonderful it will be when they see that to which they are now blinded in part. All of their feasts and ceremonies faithfully re-enacted over the centuries will be filled with such wonder and meaning for them! They will see that Jesus, the One that they pierced, is everywhere throughout their Torah!

## Conclusion

The feast of unleavened bread points to Jesus as the bread from heaven that was without sin. He is the second or middle matzah that was removed from the three and was broken for our sake. This for me, is very instructive. And it is interesting that Jesus would have been acting this out at the last supper with His disciples. Can you remember when he took the bread at the last supper? What did He say?

**Luke 22:19** And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Is it not amazing that Jesus would have been taking the second of the three portions of unleavened bread and breaking that? The Jews had performed this year after year but this was the first time that someone had said 'This is me! The breaking of this second loaf is me. This is my body which is given and will be broken, for you.' Does this not make communion more real? Hopefully it gives you something more to think about when you next celebrate the Lord's supper. Actually it is not something that you will think about but someone. The bread of Heaven who came down, was broken, hidden and then found by those who seek Him out!



# 3. The Resurrection – Jesus in the Feast of First Fruits

This is the third in the Bible study series examining the feasts of the Lord. We saw that the first two feasts, Passover and Unleavened bread, had their Messianic fulfillment in the death and burial of the Lord Jesus. Any ideas what event this feast, first fruits, would then speak of? Ok, so it's best I don't give away prizes for getting this one right because it is hopefully pretty straight forward! The feast of first fruits is all about the resurrection of Jesus. Like the first two feasts, we shall find that God is very specific again on the day that this should be celebrated and for good reason as we shall see. So like the previous studies we will examine the biblical account and commands concerning this festival as well as the personal and Messianic fulfillments. Let's start with the Bible account that is given in Leviticus.

## The Biblical commands concerning the feast of firstfruits

**Leviticus 23:9-14** The LORD said to Moses, (10) Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. (11) He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. (12) On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb a year old without defect, (13) together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil--an offering made to the LORD by fire, a pleasing aroma--and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. (14) You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

The feast of Firstfruits has been called by a few different names. It's Hebrew name is 'Reshit Ketzivchem' which means 'the fruit of your harvest'. It is also known as the 'Feast of Omer' and the 'Feast of the Wave-sheath'.<sup>15</sup> The feasts of God are based around different harvest times.

The barley harvest arrived first in the March/April period. So this feast of the firstfruits was to do with the barley harvest. Then came the wheat harvest normally around May and was associated with the feast of weeks (Pentecost). Finally the fruit harvest (grapes, figs, pomegranates etc) came later around September and were associated with the fall feasts. So God instructed the Israelites that before reaping the barley harvest they were to take a sheaf of the first grain to the priest who would wave it before the Lord. As they waved the firstfruits to the left and the right, it was symbolising that this sheaf that they had represented the entire crop. Until they did this the rest of their crop was not 'kosher' (acceptable). They did this to acknowledge and thank the Lord for the coming harvest and to ask His blessing upon it. It was to be a joyous occasion trusting that the One who gave them the firstfruits would also bless the full harvest. As well as waving the sheaf before the Lord, they were to offer a burnt offering and a drink offering. They were not to eat bread or continue the harvest until this offering of the firstfruits had been made to the Lord.



Now there was a specific day on which they were to do this. No date is given (as is given in several of the other feasts) but following the feast of Unleavened Bread this feast was to occur 'on the day after the Sabbath'. So this feast was to occur on the first day of the week after Passover/Unleavened Bread.

## The Messianic Fulfillment of firstfruits

We are not left in any doubt as to how this feast was fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us clearly:

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23** But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** (21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own turn: **Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**

Christ fulfilled the feast of firstfruits by being the firstfruits of the resurrection. Others in the Bible (such as Lazarus and Jairus' daughter) had been raised from the dead prior to Christ's resurrection but they were resurrected back into their old bodies which would eventually die again. Jesus was the first to be raised into a new resurrection body, never to die again! So He is the 'sheaf', the first of the harvest, that is waved before the Lord in celebration and with thanksgiving. In his book 'Thus shalt thou serve' C.W Slemming writes this little interesting point: 'When the sheaves were cut from the fields and carried to the city, small

*vacant spots were left behind. When the Lord rose from the dead, He left behind Him a small vacant spot, which still remains as a reminder of His resurrection - it is an empty tomb!*



And just as the sheaf was waved to represent the entire harvest to the left and the right, so the resurrection of Jesus was not just for Himself. He represented the many that 'shall come from the east and the west' (**Mat 8:11**) to faith in Him and be raised from the dead as well! As the offerings that were made on the feast of firstfruits were a sweet savor to God<sup>16</sup>, how much greater was the sweetness on the day Jesus rose from the dead? Corresponding to the fact that the crop was not kosher until the firstfruits were waved before God, so it took the resurrection of the Jesus to make us acceptable to God - **Romans 4:25** 'He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.' Or, as Paul said: **1 Corinthians 15:17** 'And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.'

But thank God that death could not hold Him down! And what of the day that this was to happen? We read above that this wave offering before the Lord of the firstfruits was to occur 'the day after the Sabbath'. This is the first day of the week - Sunday - The day that Jesus rose from the dead!<sup>17</sup>

**Mark 16:9** Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene...<sup>18</sup>

## A closer look at the date of resurrection - The Mystery of the 17th

I have previously written a study on 'The mystery of the 17th' based on the interesting events that have occurred on this day in the Old Testament. I would like to give a quick summary of these events here for they are all linked and are types of this day that Jesus was raised. So to quickly recap, the Passover lambs were sacrificed on the 14th Nisan. This is the day Jesus died. The feast of unleavened bread started the next day, on the 15th Nisan. This was when Jesus was buried in the tomb. The day after the Sabbath was the feast of firstfruits - this was the 17th Nisan. Which brings us to our question...Apart from the feast of firstfruits, what other events occurred on this day and what do they have to do with 'resurrection'? Argh... now you are asking the right kind of questions!

### The Mysterious 17th of Nisan

- Noah's ark comes through the waters and rests on the earth for the first time bringing new life to Noah and his family on the 17th of Nisan. (**Gen 8:4**)<sup>19</sup> Coming through the waters and resting on dry land was a picture of the resurrection. Noah and his family were the firstfruits of what would be a whole new life!
- Israel came through the Red Sea on the 17th of Nisan having left at Passover on the 14th. (Chumney, 'The seven festivals of the Messiah', page 70). For them this was death to their old life (with the drowning of the Egyptians) and resurrection to a new life in God on the 17th!
- The manna which had fed the nation of Israel for the 40 years in the wilderness stopped on the 16th of Nisan and from the 17th onwards Israel feasted on the new grain of the promised land (**Josh 5:10-12**). This again is a picture of the new life in the Promised Land that came on the 17th!
- The death sentence hung over the entire Israelite nation as their sworn enemy, Haman, had convinced the king to sign a decree to destroy them (**Esther 3:1-12**). The decree went out on the 13th Nisan (**Esther 3:12**). Esther then proclaimed a three day fast (**Esther 4:16**) for the 14th, 15th and 16th. On the 3rd day (5:1) Esther approached the king saying to herself 'If I perish, I perish!' (an attitude of death or resurrection... it's in God's hands!) On the 17th Nisan, the tables were turned on the enemy Haman and instead of the Jews being destroyed, his own life was taken! Again, a picture of life out death on this amazing day!

## The personal fulfillment of the feast of Firstfruits

The good thing about the word 'firstfruits' is the word 'first'. If there is a first, then there will be others that follow. Hopefully that includes you! This is what Paul was teaching in the Corinthian passage quoted above. Have a look at it again:

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23** But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.** (21) For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. (23) But each in his own turn: **Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.**

Paul is reminding us that Jesus' resurrection is a guarantee of our resurrection (as long as we belong to Him!) He has been raised and has a new resurrection body but the same will happen to all that are His at the right time. And that right time is the

return of Jesus Christ for His bride. This will be covered in a lot more detail in the 'Feast of Trumpets'. Using the imagery of a grain of wheat going down into the ground Jesus said:

**John 12:24** I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Believers in Jesus Christ are the many 'seeds' that He spoke about. He fell into the ground and died but He didn't remain there! He rose up again and in like manner, the 'many seeds' – those that believe in Him, will do likewise. And they will have a new body like unto His new body.

**1 Corinthians 15:41-44** The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. (42) So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; (43) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; (44) it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

But we shouldn't just think that we are to wait until His return to have new life. No. The personal aspect of firstfruits reminds us that we are new creations now. Yes, we still live in a fallen world in a fallen body so, just as you may have possibly experienced, that brings with it one, two or a few thousand issues with it... But praise God that believers in Him have been born again, are a new creation in Him, and have been given the Holy Spirit to be in us what we are not. And even this gift of the Spirit is mentioned in terms of being a 'firstfruits'. There is so much more still to come!

**Romans 8:22-23** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (23) Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

We are new creations with the Spirit of God. In light of this, our personal response and fulfillment of this feast is be 'consecrated' unto Him and offer ourselves back to the Lord for His use.

**Romans 6:13** Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

**Romans 12:1** Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

At the personal level, the feast of Unleavened Bread spoke of being separated FROM sin/leaven. The feast of firstfruits speaks of being separated UNTO the Lord (consecrated).

## A further look at the harvests

As mentioned earlier, the three main harvest in Israel revolved around the barley, wheat and fruit harvests. Norton (Unlocking the secrets of the feasts, page 40,41) sees a parallel here with the three main spiritual harvests throughout the ages.

“*The barley harvest came first where they use a process called winnowing to toss the barley kernels into the wind to separate the kernel from the chaff. Norton writes: 'The head of the barley is very soft and easily crushed. This reminds me of the birth of the church at Pentecost where the Holy Spirit came like a wind and indwelt believers as reported in Acts 2:1-2... In the order of the resurrections, the church is first to be resurrected, just as the barley is the first to be harvested.'*

*The wheat harvest was next. Norton writes 'Since the head of the wheat is hard, it must be threshed or crushed to separate the wheat from the chat A man who is threshing the wheat stands on a large board, which has bits of glass underneath it, and is pulled by a horse over the wheat to do the crushing. I found it quite telling that the board is called by a Latin word: "tribulum". Many people, including Jews, will come to Christ in the tribulation<sup>20</sup>, as noted in Revelation 7:9 - 14. It is interesting that you can also tell the difference between a field of wheat and a field of barley. While the heads of the stock of barley bend down like they are bowing in humility (see picture above), the heads of the stocks of wheat stay straight up. I am reminded of Deuteronomy 31:27 where Moses said to the children of Israel: 'For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after my death?' The church will be resurrected first (the barley), while those who become believers in the tribulation (the wheat) shall be resurrected during the tribulation if they die in that period. In a sense they were harvested under the crushing of the "tribulum".'*

*Finally we have the fruit harvest in the Autumn (Fall) season. This is the last of the harvests and in scripture applies to unbelievers. Revelation speaks in graphic detail of this harvest unto judgement. We read: Revelation 14:15-20 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle*

**and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.** "...(18) Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and **gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.**" (19) So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and **gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.** (20) And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

## Conclusion

Previously we have looked at how the feasts have portrayed the death and burial of Jesus. But this feast of Firstfruits celebrates, through the priest waving the sheaf before the Lord, the glorious resurrection of the Lord. Because He was accepted, so are all those in Him. Because He was resurrected, so will those who belong to Him. Don't you think it is amazing truth that God has hidden in each of these feasts? I certainly do. God has laid out the plan for the seven major events of human history! The next feast is equally as instructive for it outlines the exact day on which the Holy Spirit will come and indwell the bride of Christ.

## 4. The Comforter – The Holy Spirit in the Feast of Pentecost

The last study looked at the resurrection of Jesus Christ as shown in the feast of firstfruits. So what do you think would be the next big historical event that God would want to advertise in advance through the feasts? That's right – Pentecost! This feast, also known as the feast of weeks, would speak about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the start of the Church. Again, like the previous feasts, there are some great nuggets of truth here as we investigate the Jewish and prophetic significance of this feast. Let's have a look.

### The Biblical commands concerning the feast of Pentecost

**Leviticus 23:15–22** 'From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. (16) Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. (17) From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast (leaven), as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. (18) Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings--an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. (19) Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. (20) The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. (21) On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. (22) 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.'

The instructions from God were to count 50 days from the day after the Sabbath, which was the feast of firstfruits, until the next feast takes place. Hence from where we get the name 'Pentecost' which means 'fiftieth'. So the count of 50 days begins on the day after the Sabbath (the Sunday) following the Passover. hence it starts and ends on the 1st day of the week – Sunday. This is obviously significant in relation to the day on which the church now meets. Jesus rose on the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit came on the first day of the week and the Church began officially on the first day of the week. It all speaks of new life and a new beginning.<sup>21</sup>

The feast of Weeks/Pentecost was a celebration of the wheat harvest that was coming to a close at this time. Now from the passage above you will see that the number two is very prominent at this feast. There are two wave offerings to the Lord. These are of the two loaves and the two lambs. We will look at what this is all about in the next section on the prophetic fulfillment of this feast but for now I just want to draw it to your attention so you can think about it! And while you are using your brain, how about thinking on this... the two loaves of bread that are waved before the Lord contain leaven! From what we have seen about leaven in the previous study on 'Unleavened bread' where it is clearly used in the Bible as a type of sin, why would this offering be specifically commanded to include leaven?

The last point worth mentioning as we look at the biblical instructions concerning this feast is that the day of Pentecost is to be a special Sabbath on which they do no work. This also is instructive as we shall see. Ok... enough clues. Let's start solving this mystery!

### The Prophetic Fulfillment of Pentecost

There are several aspects to the Biblical instructions that have prophetic significance. They are:

#### Feast of Pentecost Features to Note

- The specific prophetic fulfillment of this day
- The fifty days unto the feast
- The wave offering of two loaves and two lambs
- The leaven being included in the loaves as well as fine flour
- The special Sabbath on the day of this feast

**The specific prophetic fulfillment of this day:** This is perfectly clear for it is given us in scripture. The specific day on which this feast met its fulfillment is on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. This day was the start of the church and the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had instructed His believers to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Comforter, the power from on high. And so we read in the word of God that:



**Acts 2:1-4** *When the day of Pentecost came<sup>22</sup>, they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

**The fifty days unto the feast:** The wording mimics that of the year of Jubilee. The year of Jubilee comes after 7 periods of 7 years (49 years) and then the following year, the 50th, is the year of Jubilee which is about liberty. Amongst other things those in debt were released from those debts. It was the year of freedom and redemption. Pentecost is the same as this but on a day scale instead of years. They would count 7 lots of 7 days (49 days) and then the following 50th day was the day of Pentecost. It too was a day of liberty and freedom with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

**The wave offering of two loaves and two lambs:** The day of Pentecost was not only about the coming of the Holy Spirit - it was the birth of the church. It is the believers making up the church that are represented by the two loaves. But why two? The two loaves speak of the two groups of people that make up the church - Jewish and Gentile believers.



*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit' (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).*

And what of the lamb sacrifice? This was not required when the unleavened bread was waved before the Lord in that feast. Why? Because that represented the Lord Jesus who had no sin. But two lambs were offered to the Lord as a sin offering at this time showing that both people groups, Jews and Gentiles, are accepted through the sacrifice of the lamb of God.

**The leaven being included in the loaves as well as fine flour:** The two loaves included two specific ingredients that are mentioned: Leaven and fine flour. Why include leaven for the first time? Because the wave offering of these loaves speaks of the Jews and Gentiles that make up the church and they still have sin (though that sin is covered by the sacrifice of the lamb.) But it also has fine flour. This is the righteousness of Christ that is evident in the new nature. What amazing truth this offering gives us! As believers, have we not all seen that there is a new nature as well as the old? There is still leaven (sin from the old nature) but also fine flour (righteousness of Christ)

**The special Sabbath on the day of this feast:** God wanted this day of Pentecost to be a special Sabbath. No work was to be done. The reason is obvious - the salvation that we obtain, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, cannot come through works. All works must cease and the gift must be received by grace through faith.

**Titus 3:4-7** *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, (5) he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the **washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit**, (6) whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that, **having been justified by his grace**, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

## The Historical Jewish Significance of Pentecost

For the nation of Israel, the feast of weeks (Pentecost) looked back as a celebration of their history when they were given the law. According to the Jewish writings, this feast occurs on the exact day that Moses received the law on Mount Sinai<sup>23</sup>. So it is interesting to contrast the events of the giving of the law with the parallel events on the day of Pentecost in the New Testament. Let's look at a some passages plus one comment from the Jewish writings.



**Exodus 19:9-22** The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." ... On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. (17) Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (18) **Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire.** The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, (19) and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and

louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. (20) The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up (21) and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. (22) Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them."

**Exodus 20:18** Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

Commenting on verse **Exodus 20:18** Edward Chumney makes the following comment about the Jewish tradition concerning this:

“Note that it does not say "the thunder" but "the thunderings"; wherefore, R. Johanan said that G-d's voice, as it was uttered split up into seventy voices, in seventy languages, so that all the nations should understand... The 70 voices as interpreted by R. Johanan represented all the nations of the world, based upon Deuteronomy (Devarim) 32:8 and Exodus (Shemot ) 1:1-5. So, it was seen that G-d's voice split up into the languages of all the people on the earth to be a witness to them.’

**Exodus 32:19-28** When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned **and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.** (20) And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it... Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. (26) So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. (27) Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" (28) **The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.**

So what have we seen above? We have seen that at the giving of the law, which is traditionally believed to be the same day as the day of Pentecost, God descended from Heaven upon Mount Sinai in fire, thunderings and the sound of the trumpet. It was a fearsome sight! According to Jewish tradition, the voice of the Lord was actually heard in 70 different languages so that all nations could hear the law. But the people still rebelled while Moses was away and built and worshipped a golden calf. This led to a confrontation where 'about three thousand of the people died'.

## Let's contrast this with the fulfillment on the feast of Pentecost...

**Acts 2:1-8** When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. (2) **Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house** where they were sitting. (3) **They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.** (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (5) Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. (6) When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (7) Utterly amazed, they asked: **"Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? (8) Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"**

**Acts 2:41** Those who accepted his message were baptized, and **about three thousand were added to their number** that day.

On the day of Pentecost the presence of God again came down upon His people. The 'fire' this time were 'tongues of fire' that rested upon the people and enabled them to speak in other tongues. Instead of the sound of thunder this time it was the sound of a violent rushing wind. Like Sinai where the voice of God was heard by the 70 nations in their own language (according to Jewish tradition) the word of God was heard by all the nationalities present, again in their own language, as the Holy Spirit spoke through the disciples. Amazing! And in contrast to the giving of the law, where 'about 3000' people died, on the day of Pentecost 'about 3000' were saved! Awesome!

## The Personal Fulfillment of Pentecost

The feast of Pentecost reminds us of the incredible importance of relying upon the work of God's Spirit to both enter and live the Christian life. We should avoid at all costs the error that the Galatian church fell into where Paul had to rebuke them with the following question:

**Galatians 3:2-3** I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

There are several contrasts which show how much better it is through the New Covenant and the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers. Whereas the law given to Moses was written on tablets of stone, the church is founded on the New Covenant where the law is written into our hearts (**Jer 31:33, 2 Cor 3:3**). Just having the law brings death (**Rom 7:10**) but the Spirit brings life (**John 6:63, 2 Cor 3:6**). The law was called a ministry of death and condemnation (**2 Cor 3:7,9**) where as the Spirit is a ministry of glory (**2 Cor 3:8-9**). The law was based on blood sacrifices but the blood of Jesus through the New Covenant speaks a far better word (**Heb 12:24**).

Thus when Paul writes to the Ephesians he reminds them again of the source of their victory saying:

**Ephesians 5:18** Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

The Greek tense for 'be filled' is a continuous action. In other words, it is telling you to keep on being filled with God's Spirit. It is not a one off occurrence. It is continuous..<sup>24</sup>

## Conclusion

To sum it up pretty briefly:

1st Pentecost for Israel - there were signs, wonders and the presence of God. God gave His law - 3000 died!

1st Pentecost for Church - there were signs, wonders and the presence of God. God gave His Holy Spirit - 3000 saved!

We have seen that the feast of weeks, or Pentecost, was fulfilled to the exact day as well like the previous feasts. I've said it before but I'll say it again - How amazing is God to give us this amazing outline of His calendar in His word? From this point on however, things get even more interesting. You see, from this point on we move from historically fulfilled feasts to prophetic events that are still to be fulfilled. The next feast is that of Trumpets. And how amazing it would be to be the generation that sees this feast fulfilled!



# 5. The Rapture – Jesus in the Feast of Trumpets

If you are a Christian, one day soon your day will be interrupted by the sound of a trumpet. And, unlike when it's just your neighbour, this trumpet blast will not disappoint or annoy! Unlike your neighbour's (or is it your son's?) effort, this will actually be music to your ears. This sound will be heavenly and will be followed by a command for you to 'come up here'. This is the next feast and the next prophetic event to come. So far we have looked at the first four spring feasts and have seen that each of these was fulfilled to the exact day during the first coming of Jesus. The last three feasts, beginning with the feast of trumpets, come later in the year during the fall (Autumn) season. And the interesting thing about these three remaining feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles) is that they have not been fulfilled at any point of history so far... they all await the return of the Messiah! As we study this topic together I think you will see that God has placed (even hidden) amazing truth concerning His overall plan to redeem this world within these feasts. This Bible study will examine how it points to the next major event on the prophetic horizon – the rapture and resurrection of His bride!

## Before we begin... one 'sneaky' verse

**Leviticus 23:22** 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.'

As you are probably aware by now, Leviticus 23 is the main chapter giving instruction on all of the feasts in order. The last feast we looked at, Pentecost, ended in verse 21. The feast of Trumpets is given in verse 23. Between those is this little verse mentioned above. It gives instruction concerning the harvest that God remembers the poor and the alien (strangers to Israel) and that Israel was to do likewise. Now why is this in there? Or more correctly, why did God place this verse between the feasts of Pentecost and Trumpets? You can just take it as general instruction that He cares for the poor and those outside of Israel (which is certainly true) but in that all of this chapter is also prophetic in nature, I believe there is more to this verse than the obvious.

### Prophetically, what is between the feast of Pentecost and Trumpets?

I believe that God has placed this as a sneaky little verse between Pentecost and Trumpets because He was indicating what He was going to do between the fulfillment of these two feasts. As you may remember from the introduction to the feasts study, between the spring and fall feasts there is a gap of over three months. Prophetically, this gap speaks of the Church age that began at Pentecost and will conclude at Trumpets. So what did God do during this time? He did precisely what He told Israel to do – He remembered the poor and alien (foreigner/stranger) in sending His word to the far ends of the earth so that the Gentiles could be saved. Now that age still continues today. It is the age of grace and shall continue until the day when trumpet sounds... and I believe we are very close to the time for the fulfillment of the feast of Trumpets to occur. Let's have a look at this exciting and important feast.

## The Biblical commands concerning the Feast of Trumpets

**Leviticus 23:23–25** The LORD said to Moses, (24) Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. (25) Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the LORD by fire.'

Now, it is fair to say that God doesn't give the whole game away concerning the feast of Trumpets in this passage. In fact, apart from stating that the day, the first of the seventh month (Tishrei 1) should be commemorated by the blowing of trumpets, not much else is given. We are told that no work is to be done on this day and an offering to the Lord by fire should be made. So we may have to look elsewhere to see why the trumpets were blown. A useful passage is Numbers chapter 10:

**Numbers 10:1–10** The LORD said to Moses: (2) Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. (3) When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. (4) If only one is sounded, the leaders--the heads of the clans of Israel--are to assemble before you. (5) When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. (6) At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for



setting out. (7) To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the same signal. (8) The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come. (9) **When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets.** Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies. (10) **Also at your times of rejoicing--your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals--you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings,** and they will be a memorial for you before your God. I am the LORD your God."

#### Four main reasons for blowing the trumpet

So the four main reasons for blowing the trumpet in this passage are:

1. Assembling the whole congregation together
2. Setting out to a new destination
3. At the times of rejoicing at the appointed feasts and festivals
4. When battle/war was about to begin

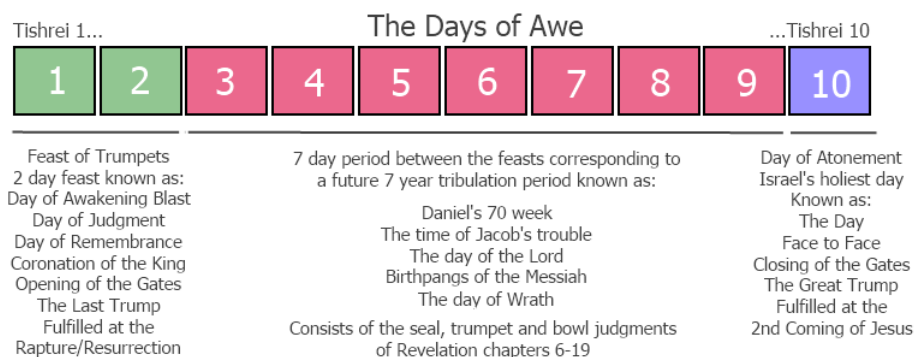
We'll address what this means spiritually later but for now, it is also worth noting that the trumpet blown at the feasts was the shofar - the ram's horn. Chumney gives an interesting list of the occasions throughout scripture where it was used.<sup>25</sup> Notice also that like the instruction given to the feasts, this was to be a lasting ordinance for all the generations to come.

## The days of Awe

As mentioned earlier, the feast of Trumpets starts on the Jewish month of Tishrei 1. It is a two day feast (Tishrei 1-2) because the feast requires the sighting of the new moon and then the sighting had to be reported to the priests. Because of the uncertainty of when exactly this will occur, it is celebrated over two days. Tishrei 1 to the day of Atonement on Tishrei 10 are collectively called 'the days of Awe'. They are the most solemn and holy days in the entire Jewish year. In fact, preparing for this time even starts in the previous month. The previous month of Elul starts a 40 day period known as Teshuvah (meaning repent or return) which concludes on the day of Atonement in the following month of Tishrei. For each day during Elul, the trumpet (ram's horn) is blown to remind to the people to return to God in preparation for the upcoming 'days of Awe' between Tishrei 1-10. Everyone had to search their own hearts during this period and make sure they were right with God.

## The prophetic fulfillment

So... how is this feast going to find its prophetic fulfillment? I think it is fair to say that the feast of Trumpets is probably the most debated feast in terms of its fulfillment<sup>26</sup>. Is it the rapture of the church? Is it the regathering of Israel? Is it the 7th trumpet that is blown in Revelation when 'the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord'? Prior to my recent study of this feast, I believed, as some others do, that the feast of Trumpets found its fulfillment in the blowing of the 'Great trumpet' used in the regathering of Israel prior to the second coming of Jesus as mentioned in **Matt 24:31** and **Isaiah 27:13**. I now believe this is associated with the day of Atonement. The more I examine this topic, the more evidence there is that the feast of Trumpets finds its fulfillment in the rapture of the Church and its connected resurrection of those 'in Christ'. I also believe that the entire 'days of Awe' period mentioned above finds its fulfillment in the coming 7 year period often stated as 'the day of Jacob's trouble' or 'Daniel's 70th week' which leads up to the return of Christ at His second coming in glory (fulfilling the day of Atonement). But all of this is preceded by the feast of Trumpets. It is what kicks this whole period off. And that event, as stated above, is fulfilled I believe at the rapture/resurrection of the church. The following chart may help make it clearer.



Now the reasons for believing that the feast of trumpets is fulfilled at the rapture/resurrection of the Church become all the more clear as we look at the names and theme's that are well known and established in Jewish thought surrounding the feast of Trumpets. Let's do that now.

## Jewish names and themes for the feast of Trumpets

The following gives the Jewish names and themes for this feast as well as the prophetic significance and fulfillment.

### Rosh HaShanah – 'Head of the year'

Tishrei 1 is also first day of the Jewish new year in their civil calendar. It is also believed that Adam was created on this day so it is not only the start of a new year but is the birthday of the human race!

Fulfillment: The fulfillment, at the rapture, will certainly be a whole new beginning for the children of God! It is on that day that everything is reset anew as those 'in Christ' are taken to Heaven. How interesting that the first creation started on this day (according to Jewish belief) and the church will experience the full reality of the new creation again on this day! Also consider this: What day did Noah, when he was on the ark, get to remove the covering of the ark and see the new post-flood world for the first time once the waters had receded?

**Genesis 8:13** 'By the **first day of the first month** of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry.'

Yep, it was the first day of the first month which is Tishrei 1 – the same day that would become the feast of Trumpets, or Rosh HaShanah, the new year, the new beginning! Noah saw his new world on this day. It is quite likely that this is a type for resurrected believers seeing their new world (Heaven) for the first time on this day.

### Yom Teruah – 'Day of Awakening Blast'

Jewish belief is that the resurrection of the dead will occur on the feast of Trumpets. This 'awakening blast' is the sound that is said to awaken those that sleep (have died) raising them to life. The great passage in Isaiah speaks of this 'awakening' that occurs at the resurrection of the dead:

**Isaiah 26:19** 'Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. **You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy**, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.'

Fulfillment: At the rapture, the trumpet will be heard and the dead will rise!

**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** (16) **For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God**, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

And how can you not love those last words? 'And so we will be with the Lord forever!'



### The Last Trump

The term 'the last trump' or 'last trumpet' is well known to believers because Paul uses it to define the time that the rapture and resurrection will take place. Here is the key scripture:

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52** Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- (52) in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

So what was Paul talking about when he mentioned this event happening at the 'last trumpet'? The last trump was a phrase known at the time and spoke of the last great trumpet that occurred on the feast of Trumpets. On that day 100 trumpet blasts were heard. The last one was called 'the last trump'. Arnold Fructenbaum writes: *'Paul is writing from his own Pharisaic, rabbinic background. The last trump is a technical term for the final, long, and most significant trumpet blast of the Feast of Trumpets... Paul was saying that the Feast of Trumpets was going to be fulfilled by the rapture of the Church.'* So here we have even further proof that the rapture and resurrection is tied directly with this next feast.

### Yom Zikaron – 'Day of Remembrance'

The feast of Trumpets is also known as the Day of Remembrance. It is a day on which they remember God. But also, it is a day on which God is said to remember them.

Fulfillment: The wonderful passage from Malachi notes how God is currently remembering those that believe in Him and what the result of this will be.

**Malachi 3:16-18** Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, **and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written** in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. (17) **They will be mine**, says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. **I will spare them**, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. (18) And **you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked**, between those who serve God and those who do not.'

God is writing a book or scroll of remembrance for all those that fear His name. It is those that He will 'spare' when He makes up His treasured possession. But spared from what exactly? The next verse, which starts in chapter 4 goes on to say what they are spared from:

**Malachi 4:1-2** Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire, says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. (2) But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.

Clearly, the day that the righteous are spared from is the time of judgment and wrath that is coming upon the earth. This corresponds exactly with the feast of trumpets being the rapture and removal of the bride to Heaven before the 'days of awe', the time of wrath, that falls upon this earth. God will remember us. God will draw a distinction between the righteous and the wicked just as He said in Malachi.

## Yom Hadin - 'Day of Judgment'

Jewish thought also associated the feast of Trumpets with the day of Judgment. God was said to open the books on that day and judge the righteous and the wicked according to what they had done. There were said to be three classes: The wholly righteous, the wholly wicked and the intermediates.

Fulfillment: Prophetically, this has meaning again for both the believer and unbeliever. For believers, following the rapture of the church to heaven, is the Judgment Seat of Christ where our lives and even motives will be examined.

**Romans 14:10-12** You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. (11) It is written: " 'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.' " (12) So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

**1 Corinthians 4:5** Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.'

For the unbeliever, 'Yom Hadin' will also usher in judgment... but of a different type. Believers won't face the wrath of God for this has been taken by Christ. But those that reject the offering of Christ will face the wrath of God. Their day of judgment will begin while they are still on earth during the 'days of awe'. Apart from the trumpet at the rapture, trumpets are used to announce the the judgements of God as evident throughout the book of Revelation. According to Jewish belief, in the days of Awe, some will be 'wholly wicked' and will not repent even with clear evidence of God (**Rev 16:11,21**) But the 'intermediates' will choose in this day which way they go. They will have until death or the day of Atonement (the return of Jesus Christ in glory to earth) to turn to the Lord before it is too late.

In connection with the feast of trumpets beginning this period of judgement is the fact that the Jews also associated this feast with 'the time of Jacob's trouble'. Thus they saw that the 'days of Awe' were going to be an incredibly difficult time for the nation of Israel as well. It is their 'dark day'. But, as Jeremiah tells us, they 'shall be saved out of it' (**Jer 30:6-7**)

## Yom Hamelech - Day of Coronation of the King

This feast was also associated with the coronation of the King. For example, we read the following about the coronation of King Solomon:

**1 Kings 1:39** Zadok the priest then took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. **Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!"**

Fulfillment: Jesus is the coming King! This process starts at the rapture where He is established as the king of the earth. Revelation, with the breaking of each seal, depicts the process of the King taking back His Kingdom having established Himself as the only one with the rights to this world in Revelation 5. He is the One that has been given the decree to reign:

**Psalms 2:7-8** I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father. (8) Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

This process of judging and retaking this world will carry on through the 7 year period until He returns with this name on His robe - 'King of kings and Lord of Lords!' (**Rev 19:16**) It is quite likely that the 7th trumpet which announces that the 'kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Christ' will also fall in the final year of that period on the feast of trumpets.<sup>27</sup>

## Yom Hakeseh - The hidden day

In Jewish thought this feast was also the hidden day. It was said to be hidden from Satan. It was 'hidden' because they didn't know the exact day it would begin due to the fact that they had to first sight the smallest part of the new moon. Thus it was a two day feast because they didn't want to celebrate it on the wrong day. Concerning Rosh HaShanah, the Jews would typically say "Of that day and hour no one knows."

Fulfillment: Concerning His return, Jesus said the exact same thing:



**Matthew 24:32-36** Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. (33) Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. (34) I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. (35) Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (36) **No one knows about that day or hour**, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.'

While Gentiles read this to mean no one knows when He will return, the Jewish mind would likely see Jesus alluding to the feast of trumpets, Rosh HaShanah, in making this statement!

There is also a strong thought of the believers being 'hidden' at this time. This comes across in several passages. One related passage is in Psalm 27. This Psalm, Chumney writes, is read everyday during the 40 day period leading up to the day of Atonement (which includes the feast of Trumpets). Part of this Psalm speaks of the 'hiding' of believers:

**Psalms 27:5** For **in the day of trouble** He will **conceal me in His tabernacle**; In the secret place of His tent **He will hide me**; He will lift me up on a rock.

Other noteworthy passages on this are:

**Zephaniah 2:2-3** **Before the decree takes effect**-- The day passes like the chaff-- **Before the burning anger** of the LORD comes upon you, **Before the day** of the LORD'S anger comes upon you. (3) Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. **Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD'S anger.**

This next passage in Isaiah is fantastic for it ties the resurrection in with the hiding of God's people in their 'rooms/chambers' until the period of God's wrath is complete.<sup>28</sup>

**Isaiah 26:19-21** **Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy**, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. (20) **Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs its course.** (21) For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; And the earth will reveal her bloodshed And will no longer cover her slain.

## The Opening of the Gates of Heaven

This feast was also said to be the opening of the gates of Heaven in Jewish thought. In contrast, the Day of Atonement was said to be the closing of the gates after which there was no hope of salvation.

Fulfillment: This again is another description of the rapture. This is where 'the gates of heaven are opened' so the 'righteous may come in'. As an interesting type, the 'rapture' of John in Revelation 4 gives a direct parallel to what will happen on the day of the rapture of the church. It also involves heaven being 'open'. Here is the passage:

**Revelation 4:1-3** After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." (2) At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. (3) And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.'

Note the parallels here:

1. John looked and saw 'a door standing open in heaven'. This is the opening of the gates mentioned on the feast of Trumpets. It will open again at the rapture.
2. John heard a voice like a trumpet. As will the believers at the rapture (**1 Thes 4:16, 1 Cor 15:52**)
3. John heard a command to 'Come up here'. This is likely to be the 'loud command' of the Lord at His return (**1 Thes 4:16**)
4. John got to see what takes place 'after this' (the church age represented by Rev chapters 2-3). At the rapture the bride of Christ is taken to heaven which is the close of the 'church age'.<sup>29</sup>
5. John was immediately before the throne in Heaven. At the rapture the Lord's promise is fulfilled where He said 'I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' (**John 14:3**)

## The Wedding of Messiah

In Jewish thought, the feast of trumpets was also tied in to the wedding of the Messiah. The stages in the Jewish marriage have a tremendous amount of significance for the believer who is part of the bride of the Lamb. **A fuller study can be read here.** All believers are currently 'betrothed' to the Lord Jesus. He has gone away to prepare a place for us (the heavenly Jerusalem). He has promised to come again and take us to be where He is (heaven). In the Jewish wedding ceremony the groom would come and take his bride into the wedding chamber for 7 days. At the end of this time they would emerge and celebrate the marriage feast with guests and friends. So it shall be with Christ. He shall return for His bride prior to the coming 7-year tribulation period that will be on the earth. Heaven is opened in Revelation chapter 4 where the trumpet is heard and the command is given to come up here. This is a type of the rapture. Heaven opens again at the second coming of Christ in chapter 19 where both Christ and His bride are pictured leaving Heaven with the wedding supper / feast having been announced.



**Revelation 19:7-9** Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! **For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. (8) Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.** (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) (9) Then the angel said to me, "Write: **Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

**Revelation 19:11-17** I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war... The armies of heaven were following him, **riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.** (15) Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. (16) On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (17) And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, **"Come, gather together for the great supper of God..."**

## The Personal Aspect

In the 'Introduction and overview of the feasts' study, we noted that the personal aspect of the feast of trumpets centered on the believer being watchful and ready. Trumpets were used to alert the people of God. Because trumpets were also used in the battles that Israel fought, the personal aspect also speaks of the spiritual warfare that a believer experiences. These two aspects are related and are beginning to converge in our age. The 'attacks' upon the believer are increasing in our age. Spiritual warfare is increasing. Persecution of Christian believers has been common outside of the Western countries but as we approach the time of the fulfillment of the feast of trumpets I don't believe it will be at all easy to hold to a true Christian faith in any part of the world. Believer, you need to watch! Watch and be aware of what is happening in this world. Watch for the coming of the Lord. Watch and guard your own heart. Is worldliness choking your fruitfulness and passion for the Lord or are you growing in the Lord and desiring to help others? Are you staying alert or getting sleepy? The warning of the Lord concerning the difficult days that lie before us was this:

**Matthew 24:12** Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold...

Don't allow that to happen in your heart. Understand that there is a full, real time battle going on for your heart and life. Be like the wise virgins who were found ready when the groom returned.

## Conclusion

Can you remember what we said the blowing of the trumpets were for in Israel's history? We looked at four aspects given to us from Numbers chapter 10. Totally forgotten? That's ok... As far as I know, there isn't going to be a memory test at the gates of Heaven! Here they are again:

1. Assembling the whole congregation together
2. Setting out to a new destination
3. At the times of rejoicing at the appointed feasts and festivals
4. To sound the alarm when battle/war was about to begin

Can you see now how these will all be fulfilled at the rapture? The blowing of the heavenly trumpet will be a call for the entire, true, bride of Christ to assemble together. That place, according to 1 Thes 4, will be in the air! And when I say 'the whole congregation' that is what I mean. God will not leave one true believer out of this. Not even those that are already dead, for the amazing thing is that the dead in Christ will rise first and then we which are alive will meet them in the air. That is one big assembly! But that is what the Lord will do... He will assemble the entire congregation together for the first time. Secondly, the heavenly trumpet is a call to set out to our new destination. And we are not talking Italy, Hawaii or the Bahamas here. The new destination is the heavenly Promised Land. It is the city of God - the new Jerusalem. Thus, for the people of God, we see how the third aspect is fulfilled at this time for the rapture will be a time of rejoicing just as there was rejoicing around the feasts. And lastly we see that the heavenly trumpet will signal a time of battle and war for those still on the earth. It is the sound of alarm for those left behind. As the prophet Joel spoke about:

**Joel 2:1-2 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill.** Let all who live in the land tremble, **for the day of the LORD is coming.** It is close at hand-- (2) a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come.

Like I said at the beginning of this study - we are approaching the time when the heavenly trumpet will be heard. Jesus is coming soon. Run your race well... Finish the race well... For the new day could well dawn quicker than you think!

## 6. The Return – Jesus in the Day of Atonement

As we move forward from the feast of trumpets we see that the next feast is the holiest of all – the day of Atonement. Of all the Jewish festivals this was the most solemn. As mentioned in the previous study, the days leading up to this day were called the 'days of awe' and they were a time of repentance and contrition for the Israelite nation. They knew that they had to prepare their hearts and be right for the coming day of Atonement on Tishrei 10. This was the day when the entire years sins for the whole nation were 'atoned' for or 'covered' through a blood sacrifice. It was a day that revolves around a high priest, two goats and a face to face meeting with God. The Jewish name of this day is 'Yom Kippur' which means 'day of covering or ransom.

Looking forward this day is again going to be the holiest and most solemn in its future fulfillment for it shall be fulfilled at the most awesome of days – the glorious second coming of Jesus Christ! We shall explore the biblical commands, the historical event and especially the coming day of fulfillment. But let's start with the actions of the priests leading up to this day.

### The day of Awe are coming... time for the priests to hide away

So solemn were the days between the feast of Trumpets and the day of Atonement, that the priests would hide themselves away so that they didn't defile themselves. They would appear again on the day of Atonement. Michael Norton in his book 'Unlocking the secrets of the feasts' writes:

“After the two days of Rosh Hashanah (feast of trumpets), the high priest (along with the other priests) goes into hiding for seven days to avoid defilement. The next day after the completion of the seven days is the judgement of the Day of Atonement. This paints a great picture of the future when we, as believers as a kingdom of priests, will be in heaven with our High Priest, Jesus Christ, for seven years.’

This is in agreement with a scripture used previously that shows God's people being 'hidden' away during the time of trouble:

**Isaiah 26:20** Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by.

### The Biblical commands concerning the day of Atonement

**Leviticus 23:26–32** The LORD said to Moses, (27) The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. (28) Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God. (29) Anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people. (30) I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day. (31) You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. (32) It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath."

From the commands above concerning the day of Atonement you can see how solemn this day was for all of Israel. Three times it speaks about 'denying yourself' on this day. In fact, anyone that did not deny themselves would be cut off from the people. This was not a time for being casual, indifferent or apathetic. Any work done on this day would lead to your death. It was a day for devoting yourself entirely to seriousness of the event.

**Leviticus 16:1–10** The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. (2) The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. (3) This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. (4) He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. (5) From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. (6) Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. (7) Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. (8) He is to cast lots for the two goats--one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. (9) Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. (10) But



the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

There are several important points in this passage that I want to briefly mention. Firstly, entrance into the Holy of Holies was limited to one person, the high priest, and even he couldn't come into God's presence whenever he wanted. He could only come in on this one day in the year - the day of Atonement. And even then there were commands to follow. He had to wear special garments and he could only come in once a young bull had been sacrificed for his own sin and that of his household. Two goats were then presented for the sins of the people. Lots were cast to see which goat would be sacrificed and which would become the 'scapegoat' - the goat presented alive unto the Lord and released to go free.

## A closer look at the two goats

**Leviticus 16:15-22** He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. (16) In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. (17) No one is to be in the Tent of Meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. (18) Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. (19) He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. (20) When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. (21) He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites--all their sins--and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. (22) The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.



The first goat that 'is for the Lord' was sacrificed and its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies to cleanse it because of the sin of the Israelites. The high priest alone could enter here and none other. The blood would be applied to the atonement cover. It was a silent and solemn time for those watching and awaiting the return of the high priest. According to Jewish writings, the other priests would wait outside in silence and when the high priest had finished his duties he would come out of the Most Holy place and say 'It is done'.

For the second goat, the scapegoat, the high priest would place his hands on its head. In doing so all the sins of Israel would be confessed and placed onto this goat. It would then be led away, alive, into the desert. One interesting aspect is that the Jews would tie a piece of scarlet cord to both the scapegoat and the temple doors. When the scapegoat was sent away the scarlet cord on the temple would miraculously turn from scarlet to white. By this the Jews knew that God had accepted their sacrifice for sins.

## The Messianic Fulfillment (through Jesus' first coming)

So here is where it all gets interesting. Jesus is our high priest but His offering is not of bulls or goats. It is of Himself. Thus, both the high priest and the goats find their fulfillment in the person of the Lord Jesus.

### The high priestly garments

The high priest who alone could go into the presence of God is a type of the Lord Jesus. He had specific garments as instructed here:

**Exodus 28:3-6** Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. (4) These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. (5) Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen. (6) Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen--the work of a skilled craftsman.

The sacred garments were made of fine linen and were made from gold, blue, purple and scarlet thread. This is all pointed to the nature and character of our high priest Jesus. Fine linen in the Bible speaks of righteousness (**Rev 19:8**). Each of the colours

is instructive of Jesus. Gold speaks of the divine nature and shows that Jesus was God. Blue speaks of the heavens thus showing the origins from which He came. Purple speaks of kingship and shows that this priest is also a king! And lastly scarlet speaks of a blood sacrifice. Though divine and the king of kings, the one from Heaven was willing to lay down His life as a sacrifice.

The garments of the high priest on the day of Atonement were different however. He did not come in with the rich colours of gold, blue, purple etc. On the day of Atonement he only wore white. The other priests also wore white. This symbolized the need for forgiveness and purity that governed this holy day.



The white garments are also prophetic. During the sacrifices required on this day the garments of the high priest would be stained with blood. This is a pointer to the ultimate fulfillment of this day when the true high priest comes from heaven as glimpsed in Revelation 19:

**Revelation 19:11-14** I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. (12) His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. (13) **He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood**, and his name is the Word of God. (14) **The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.**

## The two goats

Jesus is the fulfillment of both goats. In the goat 'for the Lord' Jesus had to be sacrificed for the sins of the people. Just as the blood from this goat was used to cleanse the Holy Place, so it was Jesus' blood that cleansed the heavenly sanctuary. The New Testament is clear on this. In contrasting the old sacrifices with that of Jesus we read:

**Hebrews 9:7-14** But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance... When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, **he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle** that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. (12) He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; **but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood**, having obtained eternal redemption. (13) The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. (14) **How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!**

So the earthly tabernacle and temple was modeled on the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus had to enter this with, and by, His own blood. It is this blood that takes away all sins and gives believers in Him the confidence to enter into the presence of God.

The second goat, the scapegoat, shows how Jesus was the one who had all the sins of the people transferred onto Him. And just as those sins were sent away with the sending out of the scapegoat, so Jesus has taken them away completely, never to be seen or addressed again.<sup>30</sup>

## The final scapegoat and sacrifice

It is really interesting reading about the scarlet thread (that they would tie onto the scapegoat and the temple) in the Jewish writings in the lead up to the destruction of the second temple in 70AD. The Jerusalem Talmud says the following<sup>31</sup>:

“Forty years before the destruction of the Temple, the western light went out, **the crimson thread remained crimson**, and the lot for the Lord always came up in the left hand. They would close the gates of the Temple by night and get up in the morning and find them wide open”

In similar vein, the Babylonian Talmud says the following:

“Our rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot [For the Lord] did not come up in the right hand; **nor did the crimson-colored strap become white**; nor did the western most light shine; and the doors of the Hekel [Temple] would open by themselves”

What this is saying is that God no longer accepted the day of Atonement sacrifice for the last 40 years before the destruction of the temple (30AD-70AD). This is HIGHLY significant! It means that Jesus, as the 'Lamb of God' was the last and final sacrifice. God was not going to accept any other sacrifice after this. And all God would now do is warn the Israelites of the coming judgement. The western light would go out at night despite all their efforts for it to be lit perpetually. The temple doors would open by themselves miraculously. (And these doors were 75 feet high and required up to 25 men to open one door!) Jesus sacrifice was once and for all. No other will be accepted.

**Hebrews 9:25–26** Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. (26) Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. **But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin** by the sacrifice of himself.

## Jewish names and themes for the day

There are a few key themes and names for this day according to Jewish tradition. Together they give a fuller understanding of the ultimate fulfillment of this day. And that fulfillment is at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

### The Great Day

The day of Atonement was known as 'the great day' or simply 'the day'. As mentioned earlier, it was the holiest day in the Jewish year and was the culmination of the 'days of awe'. According to Jewish thought, it is believed that the fate of those whose names were not written into the book of life by the feast of trumpets have until the day of Atonement to find forgiveness and salvation from God. Prophetically, it speaks of the day Jesus returns at His second coming. Those that are not saved by this day are not given another opportunity. That day is their last chance.

### Face to Face

The day of Atonement was also known as the day of 'face to face'. This was because it was the one day a year where the high priest could come into the presence of God. This has a dual prophetic fulfillment concerning the two comings of Jesus Christ. At the first coming it speaks of the Lord Jesus going back into Heaven before God as our high priest through His own blood (**Heb 9:11–12**). The phrase 'face to face' is also used by Paul to speak of the day when all believers will see Him:

**1 Corinthians 13:12** Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

The phrase also speaks of the day when the nation of Israel shall look on the one they pierced and find atonement for their sins:

**Zechariah 12:10** And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

### Affliction

The day was also known for 'the affliction of the soul'. Thus the Israelites would fast on this day and abstain from anointing their body, wearing leather shoes and cohabitation. The true affliction of the soul will come when Israel sees their Messiah and realizes that they had rejected and killed their Messiah Jesus.<sup>32</sup> This is portrayed in the following prophecy (following on from **Zec 12:10** above):

**Zechariah 12:11–14** On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (12) The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, (13) the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, (14) and all the rest of the clans and their wives.

It is also portrayed as a type in the recognition and reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers (which, you may remember, comes during a seven year period of famine and difficulty!) amongst many tears.

**Genesis 45:1–15** Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. (2) And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it. (3) Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. (4) Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! (5) And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you... (14) Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. (15) And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

## The Great Shofar (trump)

You may remember from the study on the feast of trumpets that it included the phrase 'the last trump' to speak of the last trumpet or shofar that was blown on that day. Prophetically this spoke of the trumpet sound that will occur at the rapture to awaken the dead and assemble the believers together. Well, the day of Atonement had the blast of a trumpet as well. This was known as the 'great trump' (Shofar HaGadol). The fulfillment of this will come at the return of Jesus. Two separate prophecies speak of the 'great trumpet' that will occur at that time to regather the remaining Jews scattered around the world. They will be brought back to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

**Isaiah 27:12-13** In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, **and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one.** (13) And in that day **a great trumpet will sound.** Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

**Matthew 24:30-31** "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. (31) "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.

## The Closing of the Gates (Neilah)

You may also remember that the feast of trumpets has the theme of 'the opening of the gates' associated with it. Well, the very last act of the day of Atonement is 'Neilah' - the closing of the gates. Chumney writes in 'The seven festivals of the Messiah' concerning this:

'Neilah is the closing or final service of Yom Kippur . It is the Jewish belief that the gates of Heaven are open during the days of repentance to receive our prayers for forgiveness and that they close after the neilah service. (Specifically, they are open on Rosh HaShanah to let the righteous into Heaven and remain open until the neilah service of Yom Kippur.) When the final blast of the shofar (the Shofar HaGadol , the Great Trumpet) is heard at the end of the neilah service, those who have observed the day with sincerity should feel that they have been inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life.'

The meaning and outworking of this is simple enough - Jesus will return to this earth on the day of Atonement. The Bible declared that 'Today' is the day of salvation but the day of Atonement when Jesus returns will see the closing of the gates of Heaven. If a person is not saved by this day then the opportunity has forever passed. Please don't be one of those.

## The Second Coming... of Moses!

There is an interesting little type that I would like to draw your attention to with our friend Moses that relates to the second coming of Jesus Christ. You may remember that Moses went up Mount Sinai to meet with God and receive the ten commandments. Upon coming back down the mount he heard what was going on in the Israelite camp with the golden calf and, in anger, he threw and broke the stone tablets on which the commandments were written. So the first 'coming down' of Moses from the presence of God was not overly successful, ended with the sin and rebellion of the Israelites. (Ex 32). So Moses again went to the top of Mount Sinai a second time to meet with God.

**Exodus 34:28-35** **Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water.** And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant--the Ten Commandments. (29) **When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.** (30) When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. (31) But Moses called to them; so Aaron and all the leaders of the community came back to him, and he spoke to them. (32) Afterward all the Israelites came near him, and he gave them all the commands the LORD had given him on Mount Sinai. (33) When Moses finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face. (34) But whenever he entered the LORD's presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, (35) they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the LORD.

So what is so interesting about this in relation to Jesus' second coming on the day of Atonement? Well, according to Jewish belief, the day that Moses went back up the mountain was, in their calendar, the 1st of Elul. He was with God, as we read above, for 40 days and 40 nights. Thus Moses came down from God's presence on Tishrei 10! (The 30 days of Elul and the 10 days of Tishrei making up the 40 day period). Tishrei 10 is, as I'm sure you are aware now, the day of Atonement!

So Moses descended the second time from God's presence on the day of Atonement and this time there is something different about him... His face shone! Now, I don't want to insult your intelligence, but let me just spell this out and run that risk anyway! The two times that Moses came down from the presence of God on the mountain represent the two comings of Jesus Christ. The first descent of Moses saw that nation of Israel in rebellion and sin which is what happened when Jesus came the first time. At the second descent the Israelites were not in rebellion and Moses' face shone with the glory of God. In fact, at the second descent Moses also brought the instructions for building the tabernacle for God which they went on to construct. This second descent points to the glorious coming of Jesus Christ, on the day of Atonement, when His coming shall light up the sky from east to west! And just as Moses then built the tabernacle, Jesus shall tabernacle amongst mankind and rule and reign in His Messianic Kingdom. This is what the next study on the feast of Tabernacles will focus on. It should also be noted that at the return of Jesus Christ is likely to not just be any day of Atonement but the special one that came only once in a generation. We'll look at that now.



## A special day of Atonement - the Jubilee

**Leviticus 25:8-13** 'Count off seven sabbaths of years--seven times seven years--so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. (9) Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. (10) Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. (11) The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. (12) For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. (13) 'In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.

We see in this passage that every 49th year would initiate a special year called the 'year of Jubilee'.<sup>33</sup> This year began on the day of Atonement. It was a year that saw all debts wiped away, all slaves freed in Israel to go back to their home and family, and all land that had been lost returned to its original owner.<sup>34</sup> It began a year of freedom and liberty. It was quite a year! While we don't know today when the year of Jubilee is, God obviously does and I believe that when Jesus returns at the second coming it will not only be on the day of Atonement... but it will be on the day of Atonement that begins the year of Jubilee. At that time all those entering the Messianic Kingdom will experience liberty and freedom from slavery (spiritually speaking). They will see that their debt of sin has been entirely wiped clean. And it will also be the year that the land (this planet) returns to its rightful owner... and that is Jesus Christ! (**Col 1:16, Psa 24:1**)

## Conclusion

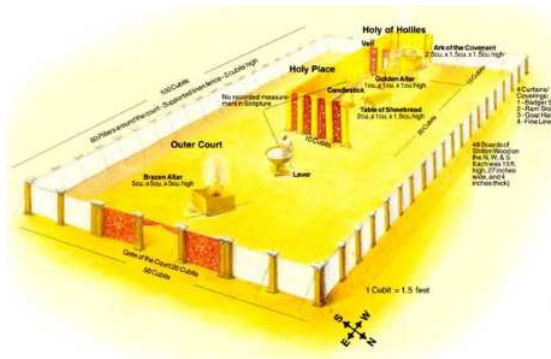
To sum up, the day of Atonement was the most holy and solemn day in all of Israel's calendar. It was a day when the sins of the entire nation, for the entire year, came before both the people and the Lord. But through the provision of God, it was the day when the sins could be atoned for. The two goats, both representing the Lord Jesus, were a temporary provision given by God to cover the sins of the people.

The fulfillment of this day will be seen when Jesus returns. The 'days of Awe' will reach their crescendo on that day. It marks the last chance for any to be saved for, as we have read, on that day the gates of Heaven are again closed. For the nation of Israel it is the day of release from their enemies but also the day of mourning as they realise how they 'pierced' and killed their Messiah 2000 years ago. It is the day when the entire world will come 'face to face' with the living God and see Him with their own eyes. It is a day of liberty for the people of God. It is a day of judgement for the enemies of God. For the Lord Himself it is the day when this planet is returned to its rightful owner (HIm!) and His reign begins. It is the day of Atonement - the most solemn and holy day of all.

# 7. The Kingdom – Jesus in the feast of Tabernacles

We come now to the last of the seven feasts – the feast of tabernacles. This festival is filled with joy and celebration and stands in stark contrast to the solemn day of Atonement and the days of Awe that preceded it just days earlier. This is a feast that celebrates the gathering of the fruit harvest which has just taken place and as such, is full of rejoicing in God's blessing and abundance. This yearly feast is of course but a precursor to the ultimate fulfillment that takes place when Jesus Christ sets up His kingdom and begins to rule on planet Earth. The solemn and awe inspiring day of Atonement (which symbolises the return of Jesus Christ) will be replaced with the rejoicing and splendour of the Kingdom age! Isn't it good to know that the last of these seven feasts, which give a prophetic overview of God's plan for the ages, ends with celebration and joy? If we look around the world today we see many crazy and sometimes unbelievably horrific things happening... In such days we can be tempted to think that things are falling apart. And in a human sense they are. Yet in another sense, they are actually falling into place. All of these things play their part leading up to the new day that will dawn with the return and rule of the Messiah. So let's explore this feast in greater detail so that we can begin to grasp more fully this great age that is still to come. Let's begin with the great desire of God... and man!

## God's desire to 'tabernacle' with man



At the heart of this feast is the desire of God to tabernacle with mankind. A quick survey of the Bible shows this truth from the first book to the last. Early in Genesis we read of how God dwelt among His creation as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day (**Gen 3:8**). After the fall we still see this same desire with the construction of the Tabernacle during the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. This later evolved into the first and second temples where the presence of God was manifest. The first coming of Jesus was described in this same exact language for we read:

**John 1:14** The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (ie tent, tabernacle) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came

from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The great promise by Jesus for this age involves both the Father and the Son dwelling with the one who loves and follows the Son.

**John 14:23** Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him.**

The Messianic Kingdom age still to come is again characterised with this thought... The King will be with His people!

**Zechariah 2:10-11** Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. **For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the LORD.** (11) Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.

And let us not forget the wonderful promise of the eternal age, for it again focuses on this very thought (and gives a wonderful fulfillment in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, to the great desire seen and expressed in the very first book, Genesis.

**Revelation 21:3-4** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "**Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,** (4) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

With this in mind then, let's examine the detail of this great feast in more detail.

## The Biblical commands concerning the Feast of Tabernacles

**Leviticus 23:33-44** The LORD said to Moses, (34) Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. (35) The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. (36) For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work. (37) (" These are the LORD's appointed feasts,

which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the LORD by fire--the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. (38) These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.) (39) 'So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. (40) On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. (41) **Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. (42) Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths (43) so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt.** I am the LORD your God.' " (44) So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the LORD.

We see from the Biblical commands that this feast started on the 15th of Tishrei, five days after the day of Atonement. Tabernacles was to be a seven day feast and it is marked by celebration and rejoicing. This aspect probably comes out better in another passage about this feast from the book of Deuteronomy:

**Deuteronomy 16:13-15 Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles** for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. (14) **Be joyful at your Feast**--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. (15) For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. **For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.**

Here we see that Israel was to rejoice in this feast as a celebration of the harvest that they had just brought in. They are instructed to 'be joyful' at this feast and that during this time their 'joy will be complete'. We see also from the Leviticus passage that during this time the Israelites were to live in booths (temporary shelters) as they remember their journey out of Egypt and the many years of living in these shelters in the Wilderness before coming into the Promised Land.

## Let's start with some names...

The feast of Tabernacles is known by a few different names which each add to the understanding of this feast.

### The feast of booths

This emphasises the command to Israel to live in booths (Sukkah in Hebrew) during this festival to remember where they came from and to remember their exodus from Egypt. Symbolically, this speaks to Christians of their current journey through this world where we live in a temporary 'tabernacle' - this body. But just as Israel came into the Promised Land, we too will one day find ourselves clothed in a new body in the eternal New Jerusalem. Both the Paul and Peter spoke of our current 'tabernacle', our body, in these terms:

**2 Corinthians 5:1-4** Now we know that if the earthly tent ('tabernacle' in KJV) we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. (2) Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, (3) because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. (4) For while we are in this tent (tabernacle), we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

**2 Peter 1:13-15** I think it is right to refresh your memory **as long as I live in the tent of this body, (14) because I know that I will soon put it aside**, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. (15) And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

So as Christians we should always be mindful that our current body is only a temporary dwelling place, this life is not permanent and this world is not our home. Spiritually speaking, we are leaving Egypt and on a journey to the Promised Land.

### The feast of Ingathering

As mentioned above, Tabernacles celebrates the gathering of the fall harvest (**Exod 23:16**). Hence its name, the feast of Ingathering. Prophetically this points to the time when the final harvest of souls has been made (which according to Jesus occurs 'at the end of the age' **Matt 13:39**) and the celebration can now begin in the Messianic Kingdom.

### The feast of Nations

Because of the reference to all nations coming up to Jerusalem to observe the feast of Tabernacles in **Zech 14:16-18**, this feast is also called the feast of nations. This is said to occur when the LORD Almighty is ruling on Earth following the great end-times battle over Jerusalem:

**Zechariah 14:16** *Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.*

With this in mind it is also interesting that 70 bulls were to be sacrificed during the week long festival according to

**Numbers 29:12-34**.<sup>35</sup> According to Jewish thought, this stands for the 70 Gentile nations that are mentioned in Genesis 10. So there has always been a connection between this feast and the Gentiles in Jewish thought and this will be fulfilled when the King reigns and all the nations go up to worship Him in Jerusalem.

### The feast of Dedication

Because Solomon dedicated the first temple during the feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8), this feast also became known as the feast of Dedication. This is a type of the Messianic Temple that the Lord will build (**Zech 6:12-13**, Ezek 40-48) and will be present during the fulfillment of Tabernacles - the Messianic Kingdom.

## Two great Jewish ceremonies associated with the Feast of Tabernacles

Each and every year during the feast of Tabernacles, the Jews perform two important ceremonies. The first is to do with water and the second to do with light. Let's look at the actual ceremonies themselves first before discussing how they find their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and in His coming Kingdom.

### Pouring out of Water

The first ceremony was called the 'pouring out of water' or the 'drawing out of water'.

Arnold Fructenbaum writes concerning this: *'In this ceremony, the priests marched from the Temple Mount down the Kidron valley to the pool of Siloam, where pitchers were filled with water. The priests marched back up the Temple Mount, singing the Psalms of Ascent, Psalms 120-134, as they ascended the fifteen steps into the Temple Compound. The priests then poured out the water into the large Laver in the Temple Compound. This was followed by great rejoicing. The Jewish rabbis said 'He who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water has not seen rejoicing in all his life'. The rabbis interpreted the pouring out of the water as a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel in the last days.'*



The Jewish Talmud gives the reason why this was done: "Why is the name of it called the Drawing Out of Water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said:

*'With joy shall ye draw out of the wells of salvation' " (Isaiah 12:3).*

### Festival of Lights

The second great ceremony was the 'festival of the lights'. Huge golden lampstands were setup in the Temple Compound and each was lit at sundown.

Chumney gives the following details concerning this: *'Four enormous golden candlesticks were set up on the court (50 cubits high) with four golden bowls placed upon them and four ladders resting against each candlestick. Four youths of priestly descent stood at the top of the ladders holding jars containing about 7.5 gallons of pure oil, which they poured for each bowl (Mishnah, Sukkah 5:2). The priests and Levites used their own worn-out liturgical clothing for wicks. The light emanating from the four candelabras was so bright that the Mishnah says in Sukkah 5:3 that there was no courtyard in Jerusalem [Yerushalayim] that was not lit up with the light of the libation water-well ceremony (Beit Hashoevah).'*



Because Jerusalem is upon a hill, and the whole city was lit up through the light of the great lamps, Jerusalem would literally shine out against the backdrop of a darkened night sky. This light, according to the Jewish rabbis, was symbolic of the God's Shekinah glory that was promised to return to Israel with the coming of the Messiah.



## The fulfillment of the two great Jewish ceremonies

So the two Jewish ceremonies associated with the feast of Tabernacles involve water and light. Water and light... Light and water... Ring any bells? With this background and Jewish custom before us it is interesting to see what Jesus said during the feast of Tabernacles. John chapter 7 through to 10:22 gives us the actions and words of Jesus during this feast. Now as a bit of further background you need to remember that God had commanded that all males were to go to Jerusalem on the feast of Tabernacles, along with Passover and Pentecost (**Deut 16:16**). So it is into this packed Jerusalem environment that Jesus begins to speak...

### The giver of living water

**John 7:37-39** On the last and greatest day of the Feast (Tabernacles), Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. (38) Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (39) By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Jesus could not have been clearer! With the backdrop of the pouring out of water ceremony fresh in the minds of Jerusalem's masses, Jesus spoke of the true fulfillment that is found in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit whom He would give to those who were thirsty. This was the real life giving water, and not just a symbolic ceremony. Of course such talk then, like now, caused great debate and division amongst the people. Could He be the Messiah? What was this living water? No one had ever talked like this before. But Jesus wasn't finished yet for He again spoke out on this last day of the great feast.

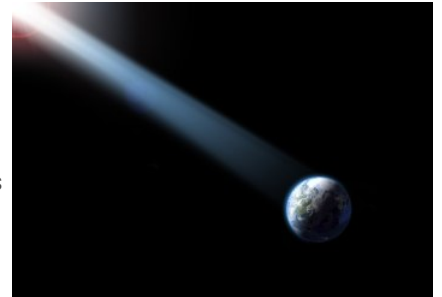
### The light of the world

**John 8:12** Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Again, this makes more sense now does it not given the Jewish ceremony of the lights that took place during this time? Jesus was telling them that He is the fulfillment of this ceremony as well. He is the light... and not just of Jerusalem but of the whole world! This also caused great controversy with the Pharisees and some Jews who decided that Jesus must be demon possessed!<sup>36</sup> But the actual fact was that the One who is the fulfillment of all these feasts was right in their midst... but most, like today, didn't have eyes to see. This becomes even sadder when you realise what song the Jews would sing during this time. In the feast of Tabernacles, especially as they poured out the water, they would sing from Isaiah 12:

**Isaiah 12:2-3** Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." (3) With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

The Hebrew for 'salvation' is 'Yeshua' - yes, that's right, the name of Jesus in Hebrew! So during this feast they would be singing 'The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and song, he has become my Yeshua. With joy you will draw water from the wells of Yeshua'. As they sung this, no wonder the Lord Jesus would stand and declare 'if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!' At the time they couldn't see or understand what they were saying and singing... but the day is coming when their song, and this scripture, will be fulfilled. With joy they will draw water (Spirit) from the wells of Jesus, Yeshua the Messiah. They will see that the LORD has become my Jesus!



## Water and light... Spirit and glory... the coming fulfillment

As mentioned earlier, the Jewish Rabbis believed that the pouring out of the water was symbolic of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Israel in the last days<sup>37</sup>. But what about light? Light is symbolic of truth, knowledge and understanding of God's ways and character. Even more than that, it is symbolic of the shekinah glory - the outward manifestation of the goodness, radiance and glory that is our God! All of these things give us a further glimpse into what the coming Kingdom age will be like. The Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (**Joel 2:28, Ezek 39:29**) which will come like the Autumn rains. The whole earth will be transformed in that day. Think again on the following scriptures that give us a glimpse of the good things to come when Jesus reigns:

**Zechariah 14:8-11** And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. (9) 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... People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.

**Isaiah 11:9-10** They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. (10) Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

**Isaiah 60:18-20** No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. (19) The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. (20) Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.

## The 8th day of a 7 day feast???

It is interesting that this feast also makes mention of an '8th' day. This is slightly odd for a 7 day feast wouldn't you say? Here is the passage:

**Leviticus 23:39** 'So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, **and the eighth day also is a day of rest.**

So why an 8th day in a 7 day feast? For the Jews this 8th day is celebrated as a separate festival called 'Shemini Atzeret' (the eighth day of assembly). Prophetically speaking we need to quickly look at the numbers used. 7 is God's perfect number. It is His seal. The 7 day feast of Tabernacles, as discussed, will be fulfilled in the 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ which will fulfill the 7000 year plan of God. But there is an 8th day! 8 in the Bible speaks of resurrection or new life. So even in this feast there is a clue that there is something AFTER the Messianic Kingdom. Even after this wonderful time there is still a new start... a new beginning. We don't have to speculate what this is for scripture clearly tells us. It begins with a declaration of God:

**Revelation 21:5-6** And He who sits on the throne said, "**Behold, I am making all things new.**" And He \*said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." (6) Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

So even after the Messianic Kingdom there is a new beginning... There is a new heaven and a new earth created by our God:

**Revelation 21:1-3** **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away**, and there is no longer any sea. (2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

## The Personal Significance

Before we close, let me just add a few words on the personal significance of this feast for today. As discussed, the ultimate fulfillment of this feast is found on the kingdom age when Jesus rules and reigns on this earth from Jerusalem. It will be a time of rest, joy and fellowship with Jesus Christ. On a personal level, the feast of Tabernacles reminds us of these same things that ours in Christ today. There is a rest today. There is a joy in Christ today. There is fellowship with God through Jesus today! Take the issue of the rest. During the period of the law this rest came one day a week on the seventh day. During the kingdom the whole planet will experience rest as the lamb will lie down with the lion and nation will not take up sword against nation any longer. But what about today? Never forget that there is rest today! In fact God specifically tells us to be careful that we enter this rest, 'Today'.

**Hebrews 4:7-11** **Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today**, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (8) For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. (9) There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; (10) for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. (11) **Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest**, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

The same can be said of joy and fellowship. Christians should have tremendous hope for the future but don't fall short on that which can be ours today as well. Concerning joy and fellowship the following scriptures are useful to remember:

**Romans 14:17** The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

**Philippians 2:1-2** Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, (2) make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

## Conclusion

The feast of Tabernacles is about joy and specifically rejoicing at the great harvest that had come in. And oh what a day it will be when the ultimate fulfillment of this feast begins! It will be joy unlimited amongst the full body of believers! As we have seen, it is a feast that fulfills the desire and promises of God to tabernacle with His people that is seen from the first book of the Bible to the last. It is a feast that will see the fulfillment of 'light' and 'water' as the Holy Spirit is poured out in abundance and the glory of God is manifest throughout the earth.

Let me close with a scripture from the Prophet Isaiah that speaks about this coming day. The veil of spiritual blindness that covers the nations will be removed. The tears that characterise this age for many will be replaced with joy... and best of all, the One we have been waiting for will be seen!

**Isaiah 25:6-9** The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine. (7) And on this mountain (Zion) He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. (8) He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. (9) And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."

## FULL SERIES FOOTNOTES:

1. I really would like you to give these some thought before moving on. It is much better if you think for yourself than just read someone else's thoughts on the matter. Well... actually, since when did I get what I want? Ok... nothing to see here... move on!

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2. I should add a rule that you are not allowed to list your own birth. Otherwise everyone would include the same answer, and, to be fair, you already celebrate that each and every year!

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3. The different order of the months between the civil and religious calendar can be seen below:

Civil Calendar

1. Tishrei 2. Cheshvan 3. Kislev 4. Tevet 5. Shevat 6. Adar 7. Nisan (Aviv) 8. Iyar 9. Sivan 10. Tammuz 11. Av 12. Elul

Religious Calendar (as established in Exodus 12)

1. Nisan (Aviv) 2. Iyar 3. Sivan 4. Tammuz 5. Av 6. Elul 7. Tishrei 8. Cheshvan 9. Kislev 10. Tevet 11. Shevat 12. Adare

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4. In his book 'Unlocking the secrets of the feasts' Michael Norton notes something very interesting here. He spoke to a Jewish friend who said that in later times Jewish families would also take the lamb to the temple to be sacrificed. They would put the family name around the neck of the lamb to make sure that they received the same lamb back for the Passover dinner. Norton notes that when Jesus went to the cross, we read: 'Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." (**John 19:19**) This inscription was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Norton then makes the very interesting point that this title in the Hebrew is "Y'shua HaNatzri V'Melech HaYehudim". Taking the first letters of each word spells 'YHVH' - the name of God! Norton writes 'Just like the Jews put their family name on their lamb for sacrifice at the Temple, God put His name on His Lamb for His family, which includes you and me!'

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5. Edward Chumney in The seven festivals of the Messiah, page 45-46 gives this amazing parallel writing:

'On the fourteenth of Nisan, at the third hour of the day (9:00a.m.), the high priest took the lamb and ascended the altar so he could tie the lamb in place on the altar. At the same time on that day, Yeshua was tied to the tree on Mount Moriah (**Mark 15:25**). At the time of the evening sacrifice (3:00 p.m.) for Passover (**Exodus 12:6**), the high priest ascended the altar, cut the throat of the lamb with a knife, and said the words, "It is finished." These are the exact words said after giving a peace offering to G-d. At this same time, Yeshua died, saying these exact words in **John 19:30**. Yeshua died at exactly 3:00 p.m. (**Matthew 27:45-46,50**).

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6. This is seen in the lives of several 'high profile' brothers in the Bible where the firstborn has traits of the 'flesh' - that is, unspiritual and self focused. Some examples are Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob. First the fleshly, then the spiritual.

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7. This statement by John the Baptist is truly remarkable. Jesus hadn't even begun His ministry when this statement is made. He hadn't spoken about Himself or what He intended to do. Yet John the Baptist, speaking through the Spirit of God, summed up Jesus' mission for His first coming. He was to be the Lamb of God and in doing so He would pay for, and take away, the sins of the whole world! Remarkable!

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8. The fifteen steps in the Jewish Seder Passover are generally described as follows:

1. Kadesh - Recite Kiddush, first cup of wine
2. U'rchatz - Washing of your hands w/o a blessing
3. Karpas - The Appetizer - dip green herbs into salt water, eat
4. Yachatz - Breaking of the middle Matzah
5. Maggid - Tell the story of the Exodus, second cup of wine
6. Rachtzah - Wash your hands, with blessing
7. Motzi - Blessing of the unleavened bread
8. Matzah - Matzah is eaten
9. Maror - Bitter herbs are blessed and eaten (horseradish/romaine lettuce)
10. Korech - Matzah is dipped in bitter herbs and eaten
11. Shulchan Orech - The meal is eaten (often lamb)
12. Tzafun - Children search for afikomen, everyone eats a small piece (dessert)
13. Berach - Grace after the meal, third cup of wine

14. Hallel – Praise, read Psalms, fourth cup of wine
15. Nirtzah – Seder is complete, accepted, give thanks

We will speak about the 'Matzah' and 'afikomen' in our next study of the Unleaven Bread feast. This is really interesting!

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9. You have probably heard the expression 'if you have two Jews you have three opinions'. Well, it should be noted that the cups of wine in the Seder are a little like that. There is some variation in what the cups stand for. Another common description of the four cups is:

1. The cup of blessing
2. The cup of praise
3. The cup of redemption
4. The cup of the kingdom

This is based mostly on the great promise God made to Israel in **Exodus 6:6-8**:

'Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. (7) I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. (8) And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.' "

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10. Today they would be the priest or vicar that doesn't really believe the word of God or in a miracle working God but maintains their place in the Church none the less. Today they would be some involved in so called 'higher criticism' or the members of the Jesus Seminar who love to act as the Bible's authority and make pronouncements upon which parts of the Bible did and didn't not actually happen (the latter normally involves anything that requires the sovereign work of God). This is the leaven of the Sadducees to avoid today! Unfortunately this leaven can spread rapidly.

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11. I have recently watched the third part of a DVD series called 'Wide is the gate'. The third part of this series focuses in on the so called New Apostolic Reformation movement. It shows what is happening within this movement of so called Apostles and Prophets and where they are trying to take the church through this desire for power and signs and wonders. It nearly breaks your heart when you see huge congregations and conferences of people seemingly throwing all caution and discernment to the wind in an attempt to have a powerful experience or see signs and wonders. It seems that the Church is putting the pedal down in moving forward with more mystical and Hindu/New Age techniques in an attempt to experience something new. I felt sad after watching what was happening. And make no mistake... it is leaven and it spreads rapidly.

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12. Ray Stedman writes: *The conditions under which the Corinthians lived were very much like the conditions under which we live, or to put that the other way, the conditions under which we live today are Corinthian conditions. Corinth was a beautiful city, a lovely city of palms and beautiful buildings, the center of pleasure for the whole empire, and it was devoted to two things -- the pursuit of pleasure (largely passion), and of wisdom. It was a Greek city, and its inhabitants loved to philosophize, and they were given to what Paul calls, "the wisdom of words." So the two major forces that were active in this city, creating the atmosphere in which the Corinthian church had to live, were these: intellectualism and sensualism. This was a city devoted to the worship of the goddess sex. That is why I speak of it as so like modern conditions today. In the city of Corinth there was a temple that was dedicated to the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, and part of the worship of the Greek goddess was the performance of certain religious ceremonies that involved sexual relationships; therefore, the priestesses of this temple were really prostitutes, and there were some 10,000 of them attached to the temple. The city was openly given over to the practices of licentiousness; it was regarded as a normal, proper part of life and no one ever thought twice about it. If we think we are living under conditions where sensualism is rampant and worship of sex is widespread, these conditions do not yet approach those of the Christians who had to live in Corinth.*

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13. Always interesting that even in the midst of the sin of the Corinthians Paul still tells them that they are unleavened even though they are told to still clear out the old leaven. In other words, in Christ they are totally spotless but in themselves they still will see sin and need to deal with it through confession. This is the same thought that is shown when Jesus cleaned the feet of Peter. Jesus said that Peter's whole body was clean, but only his feet (as he walked in the world) needed washing. (**John 13:5-10**) This is the difference between justification and sanctification. It is expressed in Hebrews as well where the writer tells us that 'by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.' (**Heb 10:14**) ↔

14. 'Afikomen' is actually a Greek word whose meaning is debated. While many say that it means 'dessert' others believe it means 'the coming one'. The latter view obviously is very interesting for it has definite Messianic symbolism. There is an interesting discussion on this and related matters at the following site:

<http://www.jewsforjesus.org/publications/newsletter/april-2011/01>

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15. Taken from Arnold Fructenbaum's study pamphlet on the Feasts of Israel.

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16. A.C Gaebelein in his commentary on Leviticus 23 writes the following concerning the offerings that were made along with the wave offering of the firstfruits: *'In connection with the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits there were offerings. But of what kind? 'A he lamb without blemish for a burnt offering unto the LORD,' a meal offering and a drink offering. No sin offering was demanded, for that was accomplished when He died. The offerings were a sweet savour, telling forth once more the blessedness and value of His own person and work. And in Him we are accepted; with Him the firstfruits we shall be forever.'*

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17. I have met people, and have had people email in to the website, that believe Jesus rose on the Saturday. Those that believe this usually believe that He died on the previous Wednesday and can't really have him rising on the Sunday for that would then be four nights in the grave instead of three. As well as the scripture indicated in Mark that specifically says He was raised on the first day of the week (Sunday) it is useful to point out the prophetic type that is before us today. The feast of firstfruits, God said, was to be waved on the day after the Sabbath. If Jesus rose on Saturday, the Sabbath, then that would have been the day that God instructed the feast of firstfruits to be celebrated on. But it wasn't. It was Sunday, the first day of the week. The first day of the new week speaks of the start of something new. It speaks of the resurrection unto new life. It speaks of the new creation. Jesus' resurrection was not to be associated with the first first week of creation (which it would have been if He rose on the seventh day) but on what we could call 'the 8th day' - a new creation by God.

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18. Concerning Mary's post resurrection encounter with Jesus, Michael Norton writes in his book 'Unlocking the secrets of the feasts' about another parallel with Christ that is explained through knowledge of the firstfruits: 'We immediately observe another thing in **John 20:17**, which had always puzzled me. When Mary recognized the resurrected Lord, He tells her, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.' I never fully understood why He said that to Mary. Why couldn't she touch Him? I discovered the reason when I read what Flavius Josephus wrote about the barley. He explained that the Jews could not touch the barley before the day of firstfruits. Once the barley sheaf was presented to God by the priest, the barley crop could be harvested for use. Since Jesus was the Firstfruits, He had to go to the Father before anyone could touch Him. We see that after He had been to the Father and back, Thomas could touch Him. As **John 20:27** states, 'Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and he not unbelieving, but believing.'

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19. Please note that Genesis uses the civil calendar. The 'religious' calendar was not given until the time of the Exodus (**Exodus 12:1**). So Genesis speaks of the seventh month and the seventeenth day. This is the exact same day as what in the religious calendar God said should be their first month. In other words, this is Nisan 17th - the day Jesus was raised from the dead.

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20. It is interesting and worth noting that if the wheat harvest is to symbolise those who come to the Lord through the tribulation then the Bible tells us who are the first in this harvest. In Revelation chapter 14, speaking of the 144,000 Jews from the 12 tribes of Israel are called the 'firstfruits unto God' (**Rev 14:4**). In what sense could they possibly be firstfruits when Jesus and the early believers are called firstfruits (James 1:18) and these 144,000 believers come to the Lord over 2000 years later? Only in the sense that the tribulation period, also known as Daniel's 70th week, is a distinct period set apart from the current church age of grace. They are the firstfruits of the tribulation period. The firstfruits of the wheat harvest that requires the 'tribulum' to bring them in.

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21. J. Vernon McGee writes: *'There are several things we need to note about Pentecost because there is so much being made of it today that is absolutely unscriptural. The Feast of Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week. They counted seven Sabbaths, which would be seven weeks or forty-nine days, then the fiftieth day, the day after the seventh Sabbath, the first day of the week, was Pentecost. This was fifty days after the offering of the wave sheaf of firstfruits. The church was born on the first day of the week. It was on the first day of the week that our Lord arose. Doesn't that tell us something? Wouldn't it be rather odd for the church to go back and observe the old Sabbath which belonged to the old creation when the church is a new creation? When the church meets on the first day of the week, we are celebrating our Lord's resurrection and the birthday of the church. This festival is also called the Feast of Weeks.'*

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22. Again McGee writes "When the day of Pentecost was fully come" doesn't mean at twelve noon or at six in the evening. "The day of Pentecost was fully come" means the fulfillment of that for which it was given in Leviticus. It denotes the coming of the Holy Spirit to baptize believers into the body of Christ and to begin the calling out of the church. Pentecost is the birthday of the church. It was fifty days after the resurrection of Christ that the Holy Spirit came. God was running according to His calendar and on time.'

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23. Gill's commentary on **Exodus 19:1** states the following concerning the timing of the giving of the law: 'Jerom and others say it was on the forty seventh day after their coming out of Egypt, three days after which they received the law on Mount Sinai, it being a generally received notion that the law was given fifty days after the passover; hence the feast of weeks is called from thence the feast of pentecost, or fifty days: or rather this was the first day of the month, as Jarchi and R. Moses; with which agrees the Targum of Jonathan; and so was the forty fifth of their coming out of Egypt, five days after which they received the law; it being a tradition with the Jews, as Aben Ezra observes, that that was given on the sixth of Sivan, and may be accounted for thus; on the first day they came to Sinai, and encamped there, on the day following Moses went up to God, *Exo\_19:3*, on the third day Moses gathered the elders together, *Exo\_19:7*, and declared to them the words of God, and on the third day after that, which was the sixth, the law was delivered to them.'

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24. The Believers Bible Commentary states the following on the all important question of how this takes place:

*'How then can a believer be filled with the Spirit? The Apostle Paul does not tell us here in Ephesians; he merely commands us to be filled. But from other parts of the word, we know that in order to be filled with the Spirit we must:*

*1. Confess and put away all known sin in our lives (**1Jo 1:5-9**). It is obvious that such a holy Person cannot work freely in a life where sin is condoned.*

*2. Yield ourselves completely to His control (**Rom 12:1-2**). This involves the surrender of our will, our intellect, our body, our time, our talents, and our treasures. Every area of life must be thrown open to His dominion.*

*3. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (**Col 3:16**). This involves reading the word, studying it, and obeying it. When the word of Christ dwells in us richly, the same results follow (*Col\_3:16*) as follow the filling of the Spirit (*Eph\_5:19*).*

*4. Finally, we must be emptied of self (**Gal 2:20**). To be filled with a new ingredient a cup must first be emptied of the old. To be filled with Him, we must first be emptied of us.*

*An unknown author writes:*

*Just as you have left the whole burden of your sin, and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present inworking of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up, morning by morning, to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit all through the day, of joyfully depending upon and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He wills. Count upon His working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as He wills to the glory of God.'*

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25. THE USE OF THE SHOFAR IN THE BIBLE (Eddie Chumney)

The shofar or ram's horn has always held a prominent role in the history of God's people in the Bible.

1) The Torah was given to Israel with the sound of the shofar (**Exodus 19:19**)

2) Israel conquered in the battle of Jericho with the blast of the shofar (**Joshua 6:20**)

3) Israel will be advised of the advent of the Messiah with the sound of the shofar (**Zech 9:14, 16**)

4) The shofar will be blown to signal the assembly of the Israelites during war (**Judges 3:27, II Samuel 20:1**)

5) The shofar will be blown at the time of the ingathering of the exiles of Israel back to the land of Israel (**Isaiah 27:13**)

6) The watchman who stood upon Jerusalem's walls blew the shofar (**Ezekiel 33:3-6**)

7) The shofar was blown at the start of the jubilee year (**Lev 25:9**)

8) The shofar is a reminder that God is sovereign (**Psalms 47:5**)

9) The ram's horn is a reminder of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and God's provision of a ram as a substitute (**Genesis 22:13**)

10) The shofar was blown to announce the beginning of festivals (**Numbers 10:10**). The shofar was blown to celebrate the new moon on Rosh HaShanah (**Psalms 81:1-3**)

11) The blowing of the shofar is a signal for the call of repentance (**Isaiah 58:1**)

12) The blowing of the shofar ushers in the day of the Lord (**Joel 2:1**)

13) The blowing of the shofar is sounded at the resurrection of the dead (**I Thess 4:16**)

14) John was taken up to Heaven with the sound of a shofar (**Rev 4:1**)

15) Seven Shofarim are sounded when God judges the earth during the tribulation period (Rev 8-9)

16) The shofar was used for the coronation of kings (**1 Kings 1:34, 39**)

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26. This is not without its problems mind you and I don't say I have all the answers. Hence why there is debate and different opinions concerning this topic. Let me do a little thinking out loud... Well, in writing. The main objection to the rapture being the fulfillment of the feast of trumpets is that it breaks the doctrine of imminence. That is, if the rapture occurs on the day of the feast of trumpets then Jesus can't come back at anytime - it can only be, and will be, on that particular day. Against this is the argument that the actual phrase that Jesus said concerning His coming 'of that day no man knows the day or the hour...' is actually a phrase the Jews used specifically of the feast of trumpets. So Jesus may have been giving a nod to the feast of trumpets in saying that exact phrase. But then in another passage Jesus said that His return would be 'in an hour that you do not expect Him.' (**Matt 24:44**) If everyone is expecting Jesus to return on one of the two days the Jews celebrate the feast of trumpets then wouldn't this contradict Jesus' statement that it would be in an unexpected hour? Possibly. But there are a few things against it. Firstly, most Christians don't know anything about the feasts and aren't expecting Him on that day. Also there is some debate about the accuracy of the modern Jewish calendar and whether the day that the Jews currently celebrate the feast of Trumpets (and other feasts) on are the actual days given by God in His word. So it is possible in this sense that the rapture could fall on the feast of trumpets but still be a date that even those who know about the feast of trumpets do not expect! Finally, for the listeners of Jesus, and the vast majority of believers throughout church history, the fact that Jesus didn't come in their lifetime means that He will actually come at a time they think not! So Jesus comment has already been fulfilled in that regard. For me personally, I look for the blessed hope all the time. But from what I have learned of the feast of trumpets, all the aspects of this feast do point to the rapture as the fulfillment. So while I'm always watching, I will be watching even more intently during those fall (Sept - Oct) months :) ↩

27. Just another 'thinking out loud'... The feasts in Jesus' first coming were all fulfilled in one year. That is, all the key events (Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit) all took place in the one calendar year. But the key events surrounding His return could take place over several years (7 years, Daniel's 70th week). So it may be that the many themes of the feast of trumpets are not all fulfilled at one time. They could be fulfilled on the specific day over a few years (while still having the primary fulfillment at the rapture/resurrection before the days of Awe). For example, one theme is about King Messiah being crowned and starting his rule. The ultimate fulfillment of this could well be on the day that the 7th angel sounds the trumpet. Two things are said to happen then: 'The mystery of God is finished' (**Rev 10:7**) and 'the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord' (**Rev 11:15**). Related to this, think about the fall of Jericho... Here you had the children of Israel walking around the walls of Jericho 7 times and blowing the trumpet each time. But on the 7th time around, they had to march 7 times around. Thus you had a '7' which, on the 7th turn opened up another series of 7. A 7 within a 7. Once they blew the trumpets at the end of that second set of 7, the walls fell down and Jericho was taken. God's people Israel had won and their rule began. Now for the fulfillment... Jericho is a picture of this world. This historical event pictures what will happen in the end. The first '7' is like the 7 seals. When you get to the 7th seal it opens and unfolds another 7 within it - the 7 trumpets. A 7 within a 7. When you get to the end of this 7, the last trumpet is blown and the mystery of God is finished and the worldly system 'falls' - It is taken over by God's kingdom ruled by the Messiah. It never ceases to amaze me how every story in God's word has another layer to teach us something deeper. Quite interesting don't you think? We could even go a little further with this and speak of those within the 'world' (Jericho) that were saved. You remember who it was - it was a gentile by the name of Rahab. And what had she done? She had shown her faith in the God of Israel by protecting the Jewish spies during this time. For that she was able to go on after Israel had taken possession of the Promised Land. Hopefully you see the parallel. When Jesus returns He separates the sheep from the goats (a judgement of the Gentile nations) upon the basis of how they treated the Jews during the tribulation. This was the outworking of their faith. Those that protect His people will be allowed entrance into His earthly kingdom (**Mat 25:31-46**)

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28. To me it is funny (well, a little odd) that the scripture talks quite a bit about believers being 'hidden' during this period of judgement that is coming on the earth so that they will not see this period of wrath and at the same time there are lots of voices within 'the church' who speak out forcefully against such 'escapist theology'. Some even get quite angry about it like teaching a pre-tribulation rapture is one of the great heresies and sins. They seem to imply that believing that believers will escape these things is a cowardly belief and that the church will go through this tribulation like it has any other tribulation. Others think that the church has to go through this period of time to 'clean the bride up' and 'get her ready' to meet Jesus (like a Protestant purgatory - which in itself implies that Jesus' death was not enough to make the bride sinless in God's sight!). It is all a little sad, for those against this 'escapist mentality' should believe the word of our Lord concerning this time. He not only said that there is an escape but He also told us to pray that we are part of it! **Luke 21:36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.**"

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29. Don't forget the threefold structure of the book of Revelation. Many people put the church in Israel's 70th week (the tribulation - the day of Jacob's trouble) but if they took better notice of the structure given they might think again. John was given this outline early on for the book he was about to write: **Revelation 1:19** "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things." What had John just seen? The glorified Lord - the vision of Jesus as stated in **Rev 1:12-18**. What are 'the things which are'? That is what John spoke about next - the 7 churches in Revelation 2 and 3. These were literal churches but also speak of the different church ages leading right up to the last one - Laodicea. Finally John was told to write about 'the things that take place after this'. What is that? And what is it 'after'? Well, after the churches in 2 & 3 (representing the church age) you have chapter 4 where John is raptured into Heaven at the sound of a trumpet and told that he will be shown 'what must take place after this' (**Rev 4:1**). What happens from Rev chapter 4 onwards represents everything that occurs AFTER the church age. All of the judgements in chapter 6-19 occur after the church age and after the church has been removed.

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30. Argh, well, with Jesus it is fair to say that the sins were removed never to be seen again. But you can't always say the same about the scapegoat. I have read that sometimes the high priest would lay his hands upon the scapegoat and send it out into the wilderness... until that is that the goat would come wandering home! This led to the Jews actually taking the goat out into the wilderness and pushing it off a cliff (note: not something God says to do in His word but what Jewish tradition brought in). This in itself is interesting. We said earlier that Jesus is the scapegoat upon whom the sins of the world are transferred. In fulfillment of this, many believe that the start of His ministry was in a year of jubilee (as when He proclaimed liberty, freedom and the year of the Lord's favour in His quote from Isaiah in the synagogue - see **Luke 4:17-19**). Jesus told them that He was the fulfillment of this scripture. What was the response of those that heard? **Luke 4:28-29** All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. (29) They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff." Wow... They tried to do to Him what they did to the scapegoat! Now obviously this wasn't the time for Jesus to die just yet so He 'walked right through the crowd and went on his way.' But it is an interesting attempt nonetheless!

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31. A good article on this is found here: <http://www.windowview.org/hmny/pgs/talmuds.30ce.html>

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32. Arnold Fructenbaum points out that the great prophetic passage in Isaiah 53 is actually a prayer that the Jewish people will say on that day. Which makes sense when you read it for it is very personal. For example: 'He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. **He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him**, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. (3) He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces **he was despised, and we esteemed him not.** (4) **Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.** (5) **But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.** (6) We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. **Isaiah 53:2-6**'

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33. There is debate about whether the Jubilee cycle is 49 years or 50. The issue is whether the year of Jubilee, which is the 50th year, is also the beginning of a new 49 year cycle. If it is then the entire cycle is 49 years. If it doesn't it is 50 years. From what I have studied I would favour a 49 year cycle although better men than me are on both sides of this debate!

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34. I'll just add this FYI... Some believe that from September 1917 - September 1918 was a year of Jubilee. If this is true, then the next Jubilee following this would be (with a 49 year cycle) Sep 1966 - Sep 1967. Are these dates important at all? Remember that the year of Jubilee is all about the land going to its rightful owner. In Nov 1917 the Balfour declaration was signed that granted the Jews a homeland in Israel. In Dec 1917 General Allenby marched into Jerusalem and retook Jerusalem without a shot being fired after 400 years of rule by the Ottoman Empire (under Turkey). So that is an important year in Jewish history. But so was the next date... The 6th June 1967 was the date when Jerusalem was captured by the Israeli Defense Force in the 6 day war and came again under Jewish control. Thus, if that was a year of jubilee, we see the land going back to its rightful owner once again. And if this is so then the next year to look for is Sep 2015 - Sep 2016. I write this in March 2015 so not long to wait. We'll wait and see on what, if anything, transpires but the events of the Middle East are already making for an interesting watch and there could well be something more significant soon!

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35. Chumney writes: 'Another fascinating thing about the sacrifices during Sukkot (Tabernacles) is that when the offerings are grouped or counted, their number always remains divisible by seven. During the week, there are 182 sacrifices (70 bullocks, 14 rams, and 98 lambs; 7 divides into 182 exactly 26 times). Add to this the meal offerings, 336 tenths of ephahs of flour (48 x 7) (Numbers [Bamidbar ] 29:12-40). It is no coincidence that this seven-day holiday, which takes place at the height of the

seventh month, had the perfect number, seven, imprinted on its sacrifices.'

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36. It is interesting when you follow the whole story through in John chapters 7-10. There is controversy on each statement made by Jesus - especially to do with being the light of the world and being the One who can give the living water. So what does Jesus do? He proves it! In John chapter 9 He declares again that He is the light of the world (**John 9:5**) and proves it by healing a man born blind! And how does He heal this man? He gets the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, the very place that the Jews went to get the water for their ceremony. Thus Jesus showed, through this miracle, that He truly is the One who gives light to the blind through the living water! And it is interesting to note that all this occurred during the feast of Tabernacles because it is a glimpse into the future, during His kingdom reign, when the blind will see and the Spirit will be poured out for the blessing of all.

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37. Which is fair enough as the Bible does consistently contrast water with the Holy Spirit. The reason being is that as mankind cannot live physically without water, so we cannot live spiritually without the Holy Spirit. Some examples are: **Isaiah 44:3**, **John 4:14**, **John 7:37-39**, **1 Cor 12:13**

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