

Celebrating the Feasts of the Lord

“Our God is a celebrating God, and we should be a celebrating people...God loves festivals. That’s why He has given His people so many of them. Every couple of months you have another reason to rejoice before the Lord, another wonderful holiday. He has it all planned on His calendar, and what He has planned is so beautiful!”¹

God-appointed feast celebrations are recorded in Exodus chapters 12 and 23, Leviticus 23, and Deuteronomy 16. In God’s instructions to His people concerning His Feasts, He called them “holy convocations.” The Hebrew word means “*a rehearsal*.” They are also called: “The Feasts of the LORD,” meaning *to move in a sacred procession, to observe a festival*.² Under the New Covenant in Christ, we don’t celebrate these Festivals as rituals, or only just as Holidays on God’s Calendar. In Exodus 23:15, God made a reference to them as *appointed* times, which in the Hebrew understanding means: *divine appointments*. So they are like appointments that God has put on His Calendar to have a *special* meeting with us. God said, *Every year on this date, I want to meet with you, because there are some special ways I want to bless you*. They’re not just for the Jewish people anymore. As God’s people, we get to be included now too! Zechariah 14 reveals that they are for “all the nations,” and that there are promised blessings for the *Gentiles* who observe the Feasts! We must remember that our Lord—the Man, Jesus Christ—is Jewish—and He will be forever. They are celebrations *of our LORD*.

These were very special days God established for His people, set up for *celebration* and *remembrance* of what great and mighty things He had done for them, and the special relationship they continued to have with Him. Unknown to them at that time—they were also prophesying the coming Messiah that God was going to send. The Festivals held deeply meaningful symbolism and foreshadowed things to come. It is absolutely amazing to see how they reveal Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and what they can mean for us today in celebrating the Messiah, our Savior and King. God established each Feast to reveal truths to His children throughout *all times* (Romans 2:29; 10:12; Galatians 3:28).

It says in Colossians 2:16-17: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a *holy day*, or of the *new moon*, or of the *Sabbath days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” Paul wrote this AFTER Jesus had already come, died, and rose again, so those special celebration days were *not* only a shadow of His first coming. They are also a shadow ***of things still yet to come!*** This is one reason why it’s good to celebrate them. The Apostle Paul did, and so did the early Church for hundreds of years. They are celebrations of our Lord—*Who they are all about*. That’s the key—they are all about HIM! Not only does He have special blessings for us when we keep our appointments with Him, the Feasts all contain prophetic elements of our relationship with Christ and about His Second Coming. We would like to share with you some of the deeply meaningful symbolism and prophetic foreshadowing of things to come. In God’s instructions to His people concerning His Festivals, He called them “holy convocations.” The Hebrew word means “*a rehearsal*.” Rehearsals take place so that you are prepared for when the real thing takes place.

Paul makes the connection of Christ being our *Passover* Lamb and then instructs the Church to continue keeping the feast with the understanding of remembrance of HIM (1 Corinthians 5:7). Paul even gives us some practical application from it—the spiritual meaning of the things they had been instructed to do in the natural. Christ’s perfect, final Blood sacrifice that removes all of our sin ended

the animal sacrificial system of the Old Covenant (Heb 10:7-22). The sacrifices that God desires (and really always did) are sacrifices of thanksgiving... sacrifices of praise...the presenting of our bodies as living sacrifices unto God (Romans 12:1).

Even though we can meet with God anytime, it's so good for us to have *special* appointed times with Him; to have special days for celebration and remembrance of what great and mighty things the LORD has done for us, and the special relationship we continue to have with Him. It's awesome to discover the deeply meaningful symbolism they contain and prophecies they hold concerning things yet to come, like the *Second Coming* of our KING (Colossians 2:16-17).

Let's begin by asking God to teach us and show us great and mighty things, which we do not know, as it says in Jeremiah 33:3:

Lord, thank You for giving us these times of special celebration with You. What a privilege it is to be a part of Your set cycle of remembrance, celebration, and blessings. We want to keep our special appointments with You. Please reveal to us the wonderful things You built into Your Festivals. Let us discover the rich meanings behind them and inspire us as to how we can celebrate them with You. Take us on an adventure with You as You reveal Your treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). We love You, Lord. In the Name of Jesus, Who it's all about, Amen.

We first need to understanding a little bit about the calendar God set up. Many Christians don't know that God has His own calendar. It was the Romans who changed it to the Gregorian calendar the world goes by today. But God didn't switch to the Roman calendar when they commanded everyone to switch. He still goes by *His calendar*. This is an excellent explanation:

"The Gregorian calendar, used by most western nations today, was established by Pope Gregory VIII in 1582. It is a solar calendar. The Jewish calendar uses both lunar *and* solar movements, by which the months are determined by the moon, and the year is determined by the sun. The Jewish day begins at sunset...There are 12 months in the Jewish calendar, each with 29 or 30 days. Approximately every third year is a leap year containing an extra month. This adjustment is necessary to ensure that the major Festivals stay in their appointed *seasons*.

"For centuries the calendar was determined each month by the *sighting* of the new moon (and still is by some) (Numbers 10:10; Psalm 81:3)...In Exodus 12, God established the order of the months. This was used to determine the holidays.

"Dates of Jewish holidays remain the same on the Hebrew calendar, but where they fall on the Gregorian January-December calendar varies year-by-year."³

It says in Daniel 7:25-27 that the enemy would "think to change times and laws," but our God—Jehovah—shall prevail: "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, Whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

Let's compare God's calendar to the "Gregorian" calendar:

“The LORD (YHWH) begins the year in early spring as plant life begins to bud and grow; the world begins the year in the middle of dead winter. Our Creator’s months start with the visibility of the crescent moon, whereas the world’s months start arbitrarily. God begins the day with a beautiful sunset; the world starts the day at midnight in utter darkness.”⁴

Symbolism in the Numbers:

Even the numbers that are related to God’s appointed times have meaning. There are seven major Festivals (the number seven is God’s number of perfection). There are three groups of Feasts (the number three is symbolic of the Trinity). The first three Feasts take place close together in the Spring of the year over a period of eight days (they are a picture of redemption and cleansing). The middle Feast takes place at the beginning of the summer (a celebration of God’s provision). The last three Feasts take place in the Fall of the year and extend over a period of twenty-one days (a picture of on-going cleansing and coming into God’s glory).

1. **The Feast of Passover** – This Feast is a celebration of deliverance. The Israelites celebrated their deliverance from death and the land of bondage in Egypt. It was prophetic of the Messiah coming to deliver God’s people from spiritual death, and bondage to the enemy and sin. The Israelites were to mark their house with the blood of the sacrificed Passover lamb. God’s children now mark their body (house) with the Blood of Jesus (our Passover Lamb). Jesus was actually sacrificed on the very Feast Day of Passover! You can sum up the Feast of Passover this way: *I am redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb out of the hand of the enemy*. That’s what Passover is all about. Every time you celebrate Passover, that is the declaration you are making.
2. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** – This Feast begins on the night after Passover. The Israelites were to eat only unleavened bread during this week long Festival, in remembrance of having to take only unleavened bread with them as they fled Egypt. They were to remove every bit of leaven from their homes during this week. In the Bible, leaven can symbolize sin (1 Corinthians 5:7-8), so this Feast symbolizes the process of removing of sin from the lives of those who been redeemed by the Blood of Christ.
3. **The Feast of Firstfruits** – This Feast is held on the Sunday following the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Israelites were to celebrate the firstfruits of the spring wheat harvest. In reality, it is a celebration of God’s provision in the natural and the spiritual realm. Jesus’ Resurrection was on the very day of this Feast! 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 says: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” So for Believers today, it is not only thanksgiving for the rebirth of spring, but a joyful celebration of Christ’s Resurrection!
4. **The Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost)** – The word “Pentecost” means: fifty. This feast takes place exactly fifty days after Passover. This feast teaches how to receive and live in the supernatural power of God. Calculated backwards we discover that it was on Pentecost that God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. In Acts 2, it was on Pentecost that God gave His Holy Spirit to His people! It is the Holy Spirit Who empowers us to obey God.

5. **Feast of Trumpets** – This is the Jewish New Year, celebrated by the blowing of trumpets from sunrise to sunset. It is a celebration of the joy of the Creation of God, the joy of receiving the Word of God, the coming of the Gospel of God through the Messiah, and also prophesies the last day Trumpet of God, which shall herald the return of our Messiah as King.

6. **Day of Atonement** – This is a special Sabbath day of rest on which no work is to be done. It is a day of confession and repentance...“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). It is a day of prayer and fasting for the individual and their nation. It is a time for making things right with others if needed (Matthew 18:21-35). It is also a celebration of the Atonement made for us by our Lord Jesus Christ.

7. **Feast of Tabernacles** – This is a seven day Festival of JOY, during which God’s people did none of their regular work. It is all about celebrating the glory of God. It was first a remembrance of when the Israelites had come out of Egypt (a *land of bondage* to the enemy) on their way to the *Promised Land*, and they were dwelling in the desert in little tabernacles, or *tents*. God told Moses, “Build one for Me also and I’ll come down and live with you.” So they built a Tabernacle for God according to His exact instructions, and the glory of God visibly came down and dwelt in their midst. That’s what we celebrate at Tabernacles: *God’s glory*. For Believers today, it is also a feast of thanksgiving for delivering *us* from the *land of bondage* to the enemy and sin, and taking us into a *land of promises*. It takes place in the fall as a feast of thanksgiving for the agricultural harvest, which symbolizes the time of the great harvest of souls and Christ’s 1000 year reign on earth, when He will reign in ALL HIS GLORY.

God’s yearly cycle of the festivals lays out the entire Plan of Redemption, and is designed to be a journey into the manifest presence of God. It takes you from wherever you are, from whatever kind of sin or mess you are in, step by step until you are dwelling in His glory every year. It’s really like taking a walk through the Tabernacle. You start in the outer court and you end up in the Holy of Holies.

Nahum 1:15 says: “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace! O Judah, keep your solemn Feasts, perform your vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off.” In English, this might sound like the Feasts were supposed to be what we think of as “solemn” occasions. But the Hebrew word for “keep” there means: *to move in a circle, march in a sacred procession, observe a festival; be giddy;--celebrate, dance, keep a holiday, reel to and fro*. These are to be *celebrations!* And they are all about *Jesus!*

¹ Quote from: *Glory*, by Ruth Ward Heflin: McDougal Publishing, Hagerstown, MD 21742, 1990, 39.

² *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982, #2287.

³ *Feasts and Holidays of the Bible*, by Rose Publishing, www.rose-publishing.com/echarts

⁴ *Understanding the Appointed Times of the LORD*, Biblical Calendar, Spring 2015-Spring 2016, allenlighthouse@yahoo.com