

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD (1).

INTRODUCTION AND PASSOVER.

INTRODUCTION. The seven feasts are outlined in detail in Lev.23 though alluded to elsewhere, e.g. Deut.16. They are feasts in the sense of festivals (in fact one of them was a fast!).

Their study value is three fold. 1) There is a ministry of Christ in them. 2) There are practical lessons connected with them (e.g. in the Feast of Unleavened Bread). 3) They have a prophetic aspect which is of interest.

Most translations would call them **Set Feasts**, or **Appointed Seasons** (Lev.23.2). They were designated by God for three periods of the year, March, May and September (in this you see the care of God for His people; they didn't have to take the journey to Jerusalem in winter; indeed they had to go only at a time when they were free from the commitments that an agricultural nation had at other times; thus their spiritual duties were not burdensome). However, the fact that they were *set* feasts didn't give the people room to tinker with the arrangements!

Note that verse two calls them **The Feasts of the LORD**. i.e. they were for His pleasure. "Gather My saints together **unto Me**" (Ps. 50.5). By New Testament days, they had degenerated into **THE FEASTS OF THE JEWS** e.g. John 5.1.

The same verse calls these occasions, **Holy Convocations**, i.e. although they were for God's pleasure, they were times for companionship and fellowship among the Lord's people. (So often in the New Testament the Word speaks of the saints being "Gathered together", sometimes translated, *come together* or *assembled together*). There is great value in being together for the purpose of ministering to God.

Before Lev. 23 outlines the Feasts, it gives details of the Sabbath in verse 3. Commandment had been given regarding the Sabbath among the ten of Ex.20, based on the pattern of Gen.1 & 2 when God "rested" on the seventh day. There are one or two principles which are worth noting. 1) One day in seven is needed for rest; even the change of routine has a therapeutic value; the Sabbath was made for man.

2) It is called *a Holy Convocation*, and *the Sabbath of the Lord*, or **unto** the Lord. i.e., released from regular duties, the day would be dedicated to God's interests.

3) No work had to be done, and indeed, in Numbers 15, a man died for gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day.

The commandment regarding the Sabbath is the only one of the ten which is not endorsed in the New Testament. There, the emphasis shifts to the *first day of the week*, (e.g. Acts 20.7).

OUTLINE OF THE FEASTS. They are divided into two groups of four and three. The first four have had their prophetic fulfilment, and the latter three await their fulfilment. The five one-day feasts predict specific events, the other two, periods of time.

- 1) **PASSOVER.** It looks back to the deliverance from Egypt, but points forward to the death of Christ, 1Cor.5.7.
- 2) **UNLEAVENED BREAD.** The believer's life of holiness, resulting from His Death, 1Cor.5.8.
- 3) **FIRSTFRUITS.** The resurrection of the Lord Jesus, 1Cor.15.23.
- 4) **FEAST OF WEEKS, or PENTECOST.** The descent of the Holy Spirit, and the formation of the church. Acts 2.1. The phrase *was fully come* can be translated *was being fulfilled*. The fulfilment of the feast of Lev. 23 was in Acts 2.

(Note that there was a gap in time between Pentecost and Trumpets while the harvest was being gathered in, Lev.23.22. Doubtless it is a picture of this Gospel age. Note that all the corners of the field would not be reaped, perhaps an indication that the Gospel of the grace of God will not penetrate every square mile of the world, whereas after the church has gone, the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom will, Matt. 24.14).

5) **TRUMPETS.** The regathering of Israel. Matt.24.31.

6) **DAY OF ATONEMENT.** As it appears in Lev.16, it foreshadows the death of Christ, but its position among the feasts in ch.23 makes it an illustration of Israel's national repentance. Note the phrase, "Ye shall afflict your souls", and compare with Zech.12.10-14.

7) **TABERNACLES.** Like Passover, it has a backward look, and a forward look. It reflects on their wilderness journey, but looks forward to the millennial kingdom period. Zech. 14.16-21.

THE FEAST OF PASSOVER.

INTRODUCTION. While the feast is given its place among the seven in Lev.23, the detail is found at its inception in Exodus 12. For Israel, it was a commemorative feast, but typically, it anticipates "Christ our Passover" 1Cor.5.7, "The Lamb of God" John 1.29.

BACKGROUND. The people of Israel had experienced centuries of slavery in Egypt. Plagues from God were preparing the Egyptians to release them. The tenth and last plague was imminent, the judgement upon the firstborn sons. For the Israelites, a new start was impending, "the beginning of months", Ex.12.2. Redemption blots out the past, Heb.8.12.

THE LAMB. In Exodus 12, great emphasis is placed upon the passover lamb, and the details about it unfold truths about the Saviour.

- 1) It was **SELECTED**. V3. Cf. Gen.22.8, 1Pet.1.18-20. In Gen.4 it was a lamb for a man, here, a lamb for a household, but in Christ, a Lamb for the world, John 1.29.
- 2) It was **SPOTLESS**. V4. Cf. 1Peter 1.19.
- 3) It was **STRONG**. "A male of the first year", V5. See Luke 2.40.
- 4) It was **SUBMISSIVE**, "from the sheep", V5. See Is.53.7.
- 5) It was **STATELY**, "or from the goats". See Pr. 30.29-31.
- 6) It was **SCRUTINISED**. "Ye shall keep it up" = Ye shall watch it. **BEHOLD** the Lamb of God, John 1.29,36.
- 7) It was **SLAIN**. a) "In the evening", V6, lit. *between the two evenings*. See Matt. 26.20, and Matt.27.57. b) The blood was shed, caught in a basin, V22, perhaps, the threshold, and applied. c) No bone of the lamb was broken, V46. See John 19.36. d) The lamb was roasted, V8-9, an indication of the intensity of the judgement experienced by the Lord Jesus. Mention is made of the head, the legs and the purtenance (inwards), V9. He knew no sin, did no sin, and in Him is no sin.

THE EATING OF THE LAMB. The lamb was food for the people of God, as was the manna (Ex.16), and the old corn of the land (Josh.5.11). The manna is a picture of Christ in His humiliation, the old corn, Christ in resurrection. Obviously, the lamb pictures Him in His sufferings and death. When we speak of feeding on Him we are referring to the need to meditate on these various aspects of His Person. With the lamb, they had to eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Ex.12.8). The one illustrates the need for the working of evil to be abandoned, and the other, mourning for sin. Sadly, at Corinth, they were "puffed up" (the activity of leaven!) and had not rather mourned, when sin was in evidence among them (1Cor.5.2).

They were to eat the lamb with their loins girded etc. Ex.12.11, i.e. they were embarking on a pilgrimage. Check out the spiritual counterpart for the Christian from Peter's first letter, ch.1.13, ch.1.18-19, ch.2.11.

CELEBRATIONS OF THE PASSOVER. The following is a list of the recorded celebrations of Passover in Scripture.

- 1) Numbers 9, one year after leaving Egypt.
- 2) Joshua 5, in the land, at Gilgal.
- 3) 2Chron. 30, in Hezekiah's reign.
- 4) 2Chron. 35, in Josiah's reign.
- 5) Ezra 6, after the return from Babylon.
- 6) Numerous occasions in John's Gospel.
- 7) Final reference in Acts 12.4 (Easter should read *Passover*).