

THE FEASTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Why is it important to study the Old Testament feasts?

Each of the Old Testament feasts is a celebration of an historic event. It is also a preview of future events which happen in New Testament times.

There are five major parts of the covenant (testament) God made with Moses:

1. The Law, both moral and civil, Deuteronomy 4:10-13 and 5:1-21.
2. The Tabernacle of Moses, Exodus Chapters 25-40.
3. The Levitical Sacrifices, Leviticus Chapters 1-7.
4. The Aaronic (Levitical) Priesthood, Exodus Chapters 28-29 and Leviticus Chapters 8-9.
5. The Feasts of the Lord, Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16.

We are going to study the fifth part, The Feasts of the Lord. We can see the plan of God for all people, and we can learn how to enter His presence.

The word "Christian" means someone who copies the life of Jesus Christ. A "Christian" acts like Jesus, thinks like Jesus, and talks like Jesus.

Jesus was born, raised and died a Jew. He was called "Master" or "Rabbi" because He was recognized both as very wise teacher of the Jewish religion and because he lived the way He taught. Jesus spoke about the Jewish Old Testament:

Matthew 5:17-20 Don't think that I have come to destroy the law of Moses or the teaching of the prophets. I have not come to destroy them but to bring about what they said. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, nothing will disappear from the law until heaven and earth are gone. Not even the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will be lost until everything has happened. ¹⁹ Whoever refuses to obey any command and teaches other people not to obey that command will be the least important in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys the commands and teaches other people to obey them will be great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ I tell you that if you are no more obedient than the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

How will studying the feasts help us as Christians?

1. We will begin to understand the prophetic and Messianic importance of the feast days.
2. We will begin to understand that the feasts are like a shadow of things in the future.

Colossians 2:16-17 So do not let anyone make rules for you about eating and drinking or about a religious feast, a New Moon Festival, or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These things were like a shadow of what was to come. But what is true and real has come and is found in Christ.

Hebrews 10:1-2 The law is only an unclear picture of the good things coming in the future; it is not the real thing. The people under the law offer the same sacrifices every year, but these sacrifices can never make perfect those who come near to worship God. ² If the law could make them perfect, the sacrifices would have already stopped. The worshipers would be made clean, and they would no longer have a sense of sin.

3. They are a part of the Law which is like a guide to lead us to Christ.

Galatians 3:24 In other words, the law was our guardian leading us to Christ so that we could be made right with God through faith.

4. The feasts teach us something about Jesus as a man, what He did for us, and about the glory of the Messiah.

Hebrews 10:7 Then I said, 'Look, I have come. It is written about me in the book. God, I have come to do what you want.'

5. The feasts teach us about the future ministry of Jesus bringing salvation. They show us God's plan of redemption.
6. The feasts teach us about living for God.

Romans 15:4 Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us. The Scriptures give us patience and encouragement so that we can have hope.

God chose seven (sometimes counted as six) holy celebrations. They were to be held each year by His chosen people. The celebrations (feasts) had a deep prophetic meaning.

God told Moses the dates for the feasts and exactly how they were to celebrate each one when Moses met with God on Mount Sinai.

1. All the dates for the major Feasts are contained in just one chapter, a very practical and brief chapter of instructions. Bits and pieces are found in other parts of Scripture, but here they are all together so no one would overlook them.
2. If a Jew celebrated the feast on the wrong day, or did not follow the instructions for how to celebrate that feast, he would be removed from the chosen people.
3. Read Leviticus Chapter 23.
 - a) When these feasts are celebrated today there are no sacrifices because there is no Temple in Jerusalem.
 - b) Without the blood sacrifice the sacrifice has no meaning. The value of these feasts has been almost totally eliminated.
4. Christians are not responsible to keep the celebration of these feasts. But understanding them greatly improves our faith.
5. Jesus, as a righteous Jew, kept every feast including the celebration of a Passover seder (meal) on the night before His crucifixion.

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

What does the New Testament say about these feasts in general?

Colossians 2:16-17 So do not let anyone make rules for you about eating and drinking or about a religious feast, a New Moon Festival, or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷ These things were like a shadow of what was to come. But what is true and real has come and is found in Christ.

1. We have been set free from keeping the Old Testament Law.
2. These feasts were expected to be prophetic signs, types and examples.

1 Corinthians 10:11 The things that happened to those people are examples. They were written down to teach us, because we live in a time when all these things of the past have reached their goal.

While the feasts were given to the nation of Israel, and God deals with the nation of Israel distinctly different from other nations, He gives the feasts to everyone.

1. God makes no distinctions in His dealings with individuals - whether Jew or Gentile. There is no difference in regard to sin.

(See Romans 3:9-23)

2. God does not make any difference regarding salvation.

Romans 10:12-13 That Scripture says “anyone” because there is no difference between those who are Jews and those who are not. The same Lord is the Lord of all and gives many blessings to all who trust in him, ¹³ as the Scripture says, “Anyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.”

What are these feasts?

1. They are all called feasts, but the Day of Atonement is actually a day of fasting.
2. Eating food is not their main purpose. They are all times of rejoicing.
3. The word means - a feast, a festival, a sacrifice, or a time of seriousness.
4. Feasts are appointments set by God.
5. They are to be observed to honor His name.
6. Feasts were not to be celebrated only by the priests, but by all the people.
7. These appointments with His covenant people are termed assemblies.

SABBATH - THE FIRST FEAST

The very first Feast is actually the Sabbath!

1. The word Shabbat (Sabbath) comes from the root word meaning to stop, cease or rest.
2. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week. It celebrates God's resting from His labor at the end of the creation week. (See Exodus 20:8-11).
 - a. The Sabbath is a day of rest and communion with God. (See Deut. 5:13-14).
 - b. The Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between God and man. (See Exodus 31:13).
 - c. The Sabbath is a sign to remember our redemption. (See Deut. 5:15).
 - d. The Sabbath is a time, not to stop working, but to change focus from the material to the spiritual. (See Isaiah 58:13-14).
 - e. Keeping the Sabbath is equal in value to all the other commandments found in the Bible! (See Exodus 31:16).
 - g. It is the only holy assembly of God that does not require a sin offering.
 - h. The traditional psalm sung on the Sabbath is Psalm 92, a Messianic psalm.
 - i. The Sabbath is mentioned more than any other feast in the Bible.
 - j. Jesus did much of His teaching and healing on the Sabbath; often breaking, rewriting or keeping the Law.

Each of the other feasts have their own special Sabbaths associated with them.

Each of the major feasts are a specific call by God to meet with His people at a certain time.

1. To keep these appointments with God is to feast with Him.
2. When these feasts are celebrated without the Lord's presence they become as John described them in John 6:4, simply the feasts of the Jews.
3. We read in Leviticus 23 the major feasts are:
 - Passover
 - Unleavened Bread
 - First Fruits / Pentecost / Shavuot
 - Trumpets / Rosh Hashanah / The Day of Judgment
 - Yom Kippur / The Day of Atonement
 - Tabernacles / Sukkot
4. Each feast, assembly, or appointed time celebrates the memory of a specific past event, and usually also predicts a specific future event.

For example: Passover celebrates the memory of the deliverance of the Jews from the death angel who killed the first born of every man and all the cattle in Egypt if they did not have a blood sacrifice upon the door posts. This blood came from a sacrificial lamb. This memorial service also prophesied the offering of the Lamb of God upon the cross at Calvary.

Fulfilled Feasts

We will see that the first three of the six feasts have already been fulfilled by Christ's first coming, and that the next three will come to pass prophetically at His second coming.

1. The first three were fulfilled on exactly the same day of the month as their original memorial celebration.
2. We can look forward to God fulfilling the last three upon their anniversary dates.

These feasts clearly show that:

1. God is in control.
2. He is both exact and accurate.
3. He has set specific events in motion.
4. He sees from beginning to end.
5. He wants us to understand His will and plan for us.

Jewish months versus our calendar:

Jewish Month	Approximate Equivalent Month
1. Nisan/Abib	1. March-April
2. Zif/Iyar	2. April-May
3. Sivan	3. May-June
4. Tammuz	4. June-July
5. Ab/(Av)	5. July-August
6. Elul	6. August-September
7. Tishri	7. September-October
8. Bul/Heshvan	8. October-November
9. Chilseu/Kislev	9. November-December
10. Tebeth	10. December-January
11. Sebat/Shebat	11. January-February
12. Adar	12. February-March
13. Ve-Adar/II Adar (Adar Sheni)	13. February-March

These are important Dates and Anniversaries that have prophetic significance.

What is the importance of the first day of the first month?

1. The first day of each month is called the Rosh (Chief) Hodesh (Moon).
2. On the Rosh Hodesh the shofar (ram's horn) was blown and signal fires were set so that everyone would know that it was the first day of the month.

Psalms 81:3-5 Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, when the moon is full, when our feast begins. ⁴ This is the law for Israel; it is the command of the God of Jacob. ⁵ He gave this rule to the people of Joseph when they went out of the land of Egypt.

3. During King Solomon's reign, the time of the First Temple, it was the High Priest who determined when it was the first day of the month.
4. Later, it was the Sanhedrin (the 70 ruling elders plus the High Priest, a total of 71) who determined the first day of the month.

What importance do we find with the first day of the first month on the religious calendar?

1. The God given themes for the 1st of Nisan are for new beginnings and for ritual cleansings. Since the Exodus, when God changed the calendar from starting in the fall to the spring, four significant events have occurred on the 1st of Nisan.
 - a) The Tabernacle of Moses was dedicated a year after leaving Egypt.
See Exodus 40:17-35.
 - b) King Hezekiah cleansed the temple.

2 Chronicles 29:2-3 Hezekiah did what the Lord said was right, just as his ancestor David had done. ³ Hezekiah opened the doors of the Temple of the Lord and repaired them in the first month of the first year he was king.

2 Chronicles 29:17 Beginning on the first day of the first month, they made the Temple holy for the Lord's service. On the eighth day of the month, they came to the porch of the Temple, and for eight more days they made the Temple of the Lord holy. So they finished on the sixteenth day of the first month.

They finished at the time of Passover.

- c) Ezra started out on his return trip to rebuild the Temple.

Ezra 7:9 Ezra had left Babylon on the first day of the first month, and he arrived in Jerusalem on the first day of the fifth month, because God was helping him.

- d) Artaxerxes gave the decree to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. (See Nehemiah 2:1-8). (This would have been about March 14, 451 B.C. It is the decree spoken of by Daniel and was made by the Medo-Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus.)

The next date of significance is the 10th day of Nisan. God's theme for this day is one of sanctification. Three such events have occurred on this date and one is yet to be.

The sanctification of the Passover lamb was the first open rebellion of the Jews against the Egyptians. Four days before the Passover, on the 10th of Nisan, Moses told the people to prepare a lamb.

Exodus 12:3-6 Lamb 1 Corinthians 5:7 Christ

Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. (This was in the spring when the Jordan was at flood stage!)

Joshua 3:5 Sanctify Joshua 4:19 Crossed over

Christ, our Passover Lamb, was "cut off" on Palm Sunday, the 10th of Nisan, 32 A.D.

1. God presented Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, and some did accept Him.
2. In fulfillment of Daniel 9:26, He was rejected by the religious leaders of Israel.
3. This led to His trial and crucifixion at Passover.
4. Jesus was set aside ("cut off") on the 10th of Nisan just as the Passover lamb was set aside and after four days of inspection was sacrificed at Passover, the last sacrifice for all.

There is, then, a fourth event that may yet occur on the 10th of Nisan. (See Genesis 15:18-21). God promised a land, much larger than present day Israel to Abraham and his descendants.

On the 10th day of Nisan, Ezekiel is given a vision of the Millennial Temple, this is right after the battle of Armageddon as described in Ezekiel 38 and 39.