

# The Jewish Feasts

Ex. 12, Lev. 23

## Introduction

As we studied the history of the God's chosen people, we saw several important milestones that God told them to celebrate every year. Those milestones were important reminders of God's protection, provision, and correction, and celebrating them each year was key to passing on the Jewish culture from generation to generation.

What wasn't clear to the ancient Jews was that God had also built into the both the dates of the feasts and the celebrations themselves a prophetic calendar and beautiful pictures of the ministry of their coming Messiah.

And, by the way, until He began to speak to Moses, the Jews knew very little about God. Basically and in essence, they had the book of Genesis and that was all.

And understanding the feasts will illuminate and give greater depth of meaning to many passages we read in the NT. The writers of the NT were immersed in this Jewish culture and its symbolism and meaning can be seen throughout their writings.

## Background Passage:

Our first background passage is from Moses' instructions to the children of Israel in preparation for the tenth plague on Egypt. It sets the precedent for the Passover and Unleavened Bread feasts.

Exodus 12:1-28 – <sup>1</sup>Now the LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup>"This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. <sup>3</sup>Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. <sup>4</sup>Now if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor nearest to his house are to take one according to the number of persons *in them*; according to what each man should eat, you are to divide the lamb. <sup>5</sup>Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup>And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. <sup>7</sup>Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. <sup>8</sup>And they shall eat the flesh that *same* night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>9</sup>Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, *both* its head and its legs along with its entrails. <sup>10</sup>And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. <sup>11</sup>Now you shall eat it in this manner: *with* your loins girded, your

sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste--it is the LORD'S Passover. <sup>12</sup>For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments--I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt. <sup>14</sup>Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it *as* a permanent ordinance. <sup>15</sup>Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. <sup>16</sup>And on the first day you shall have a holy assembly, and *another* holy assembly on the seventh day; no work at all shall be done on them, except what must be eaten by every person, that alone may be prepared by you. <sup>17</sup>You shall also observe the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt; therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a permanent ordinance. <sup>18</sup>In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. <sup>19</sup>Seven days there shall be no leaven found in your houses; for whoever eats what is leavened, that person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he* is an alien or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup>You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread."

<sup>21</sup>Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said to them, "Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover *lamb*. <sup>22</sup>And you shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. <sup>23</sup>For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite *you*. <sup>24</sup>And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. <sup>25</sup>And it will come about when you enter the land which the LORD will give you, as He has promised, that you shall observe this rite. <sup>26</sup>And it will come about when your children will say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' <sup>27</sup>that you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped. <sup>28</sup>Then the sons of Israel went and did *so*; just as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

The second passage is the levitical instruction to the priests laying out all seven feasts in order, given to Moses when he received the Law on Sinai.

Leviticus 23 – <sup>1</sup>The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>"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: <sup>3</sup>For six days work may be done; but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings.

<sup>4</sup>These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them. <sup>5</sup>In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD'S **Passover**. <sup>6</sup>Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. <sup>7</sup>On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. <sup>8</sup>But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work."<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup>"Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the **first fruits** of your harvest to the priest. <sup>11</sup>'And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. <sup>12</sup>Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>13</sup>Its grain offering shall then be two-tenths of an *ephah* of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire to the LORD for a soothing aroma, with its libation, a fourth of a hin of wine. <sup>14</sup>Until this same day, until you have brought in the offering of your God, you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

<sup>15</sup>You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. <sup>16</sup>You shall count **fifty days** to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD. <sup>17</sup>You shall bring in from your dwelling places **two loaves of bread** for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an *ephah*; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the LORD. <sup>18</sup>Along with the bread, you shall present seven one year old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd, and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their libations, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. <sup>19</sup>You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one year old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. <sup>20</sup>The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the LORD; they are to be holy to the LORD for the priest. <sup>21</sup>On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual statute in all your dwelling places throughout your generations. <sup>22</sup>"When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God."

<sup>23</sup>Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>24</sup>"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month on the first of the month, you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of **trumpets**, a holy convocation. <sup>25</sup>You shall not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD.'" <sup>26</sup>And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>27</sup>"On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the **day of atonement**; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble your souls and present an offering by fire to the LORD. <sup>28</sup>"Neither shall you do any work on this same day, for it is a day of atonement, to make atonement on your behalf before the LORD your God. <sup>29</sup>"If there is

any person who will not humble himself on this same day, he shall be cut off from his people. <sup>30</sup>"As for any person who does any work on this same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. <sup>31</sup>"You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. <sup>32</sup>"It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath."

<sup>33</sup>Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>34</sup>"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the **Feast of Booths** for seven days to the LORD. <sup>35</sup>'On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. <sup>36</sup>'For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work. <sup>37</sup>These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD--burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and libations, *each* day's matter on its own day--<sup>38</sup>besides *those* of the sabbaths of the LORD, and besides your gifts, and besides all your votive and freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD. <sup>39</sup>'On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day. <sup>40</sup>'Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. <sup>41</sup>'You shall thus celebrate it *as* a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It *shall be* a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. <sup>42</sup>'You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, <sup>43</sup>so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'" <sup>44</sup>So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD.

In this passage, God sets the dates for the seven annual levitical feasts. Note that there are two other rabbinical feasts celebrated by Jews: Purim and Hanukkah. Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jews by queen Esther. Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the second temple in the second century BC.

(One more note. I have intentionally and as carefully as possible avoided (Christian) sources whose goal was to reconcile difficult details, completely ignoring math, important facts, or other reasonable matters to get there. I am fully committed to the inerrancy of the Bible, and don't feel it's necessary to lie to make supposed details fit. I believe that when we have all of the real facts, everything will fit without any question. A prime example is the difficulty of the Jewish calendar and determining the year and date of the crucifixion.)

These feasts were critically important to the Jews. Remember that one could lose their status as one of the Chosen People by not observing them properly.

## Spring Feasts:

These feasts focus on the first advent of Messiah.

The overarching theme is deliverance.

### Passover

(Note: Since these first three feasts are connected together over seven days, we will discuss Jesus' fulfillment of them after the Feast of First Fruits.)

Main point – It's all about the Lamb.

Jewish name – Pesach

Scripture reference – Exodus 12:6-14, 21-28; Leviticus 23:4-5

Special note – Pilgrim Festival (required to go to Jerusalem)

Passover is celebrated on the first full moon after the beginning of Spring. The Jewish calendar date is: 14 Nisan. On our calendar, it ranges from late March to the first half of April. The next date is April 4, 2015.

The meaning of Passover is salvation. For the OT Jews, it was deliverance from slavery. For Christians, it is deliverance from sin.

Old Testament event – The passing over the households that had the blood of a lamb painted on their doors by the angel of death.

Messianic fulfillment – Jesus died on the Passover, at the same time that the Passover lambs were being sacrificed before the dinner that evening.

Notes:

“In ancient Israel, including during the first century A.D., preparations for the Pesach or Passover feast took place on “Preparation Day.” In the middle of the afternoon (that is, at beyn ha'arbayim, often referred to as “[twilight](#)”) on that day, the Passover lamb was sacrificed at the temple in Jerusalem. After sunset, when Preparation Day had ended and the Feast of Unleavened Bread had begun, the lamb and other specific foods for the Pesach feast were eaten.” – [Ted Montgomery](#)

### Unleavened Bread

Main point – It's all about the Bread.

Jewish name – Matzah

Scripture reference – Exodus 12:15-20; Lev. 23:6-8

Special note –

Unleavened Bread is celebrated for the seven days following Passover, or 15 Nisan through 21 Nisan. The two major days of the feast are the first and last days, and are called high Sabbaths, and have the same rules as the weekly days of rest.

The meaning of Unleavened Bread is deliverance from affliction, and sanctification. For the OT Jews, it was deliverance from the Egyptian army after the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. For Christians, it is deliverance from Satan's hold after Jesus' sacrifice.

1 Cor. 5:7-8 – <sup>7</sup>Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Old Testament event – The escape from Egypt through the Red Sea.

Messianic fulfillment – Jesus' burial and resurrection.

Notes: Jesus was born in Bethlehem, which in Hebrew means “House of Bread.”

### First Fruits

Main point – It's all about the harvest.

Jewish name – Reishit Katzir

Scripture reference – Leviticus 23:9-14

Special note – There are a few notable events in Jewish history that happened on the Feast of First Fruits:

- Noah's ark landed on Mount Ararat (Gen. 8:4)
- Children of Israel saved by the parting of the Red Sea, while their pursuers were all drowned
- Hayman exposed by Queen Esther and hanged
- Jesus resurrected

First Fruits is to be the day after the Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread. If Passover is on a Thursday, then the Sabbath of the first day of that feast will be on Friday, followed by a usual Saturday Sabbath. In that case, the First Fruits will be on a Sunday. And only in that case will First Fruits be on Nisan 17, the exact day of the month that the other important events listed above occurred.

The meaning of First Fruits is God's provision. For the OT Jews, it was the time of Barley harvest. For Christians, it is Jesus' resurrection and the promise of our own.

Old Testament event – Escaping the Egyptians and the Red Sea.

Messianic fulfillment – Jesus' resurrection and the subsequent resurrection of many dead saints as His offering to God. (Matt. 27:52-53)

1 Cor. 15:20-23 – <sup>20</sup>But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

Notes:

## Discussion about Jesus' Celebration and Fulfillment of these First Three Feasts

[Reference the attached "Passover Calendar" for my proposed schedule of events of Jesus' last days on the earth, beginning with the triumphal entry. Based on my study, I have not only assigned days of the week, but also dates from the Jewish calendar. I believe this calendar best fits the feast schedule, meaning, and Scripture data. There are very, very few details that don't fit perfectly.

One would think that given this arrangement of dates and days of the week, it would be possible to pinpoint the likely year of Jesus' death. Unfortunately due to the variations in the way the Jewish calendar was calculated over the last 2000 years, it is not. The "authoritative" sources for such data disagree with one another and it will take extensive primary source research to establish an accurate and credible calendar to settle that issue.]

This discussion should begin with a reminder of how John the Baptist introduced Jesus when He came for baptism: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

### The Selection and Inspection of The Lamb

The preparation for the Passover begins on Nisan 10 (Ex. 12:3-5).

"In the time of Jesus, it was on Aviv 10 ("Palm Sunday") that the procession of the national Passover lamb for Israel was taking place. The lamb was led into the city from the east. It was being taken to the temple in Jerusalem to be the public sacrifice for all of Israel, four days later, on Aviv 14. The lamb was met by crowds of people waving palm branches and joyously singing Psalm 118 as they remembered God's miraculous delivery of their ancestors from the clutches of the Egyptian Pharaoh. One passage

being sung was, "Oh Lord, please save us, Oh Lord, please save us. Oh Lord, send us prosperity, Oh Lord, send us prosperity. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," an expansion of the psalmic verses, "Oh Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 118:25,26).

Following the procession of the Passover lamb, Jesus made His final entrance from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-11)—as had been prophesied centuries before (Zechariah 9:9)—indicating that He was coming humbly and in peace. He followed exactly the same path to the temple that the Passover lamb had just taken. The crowds of people, most of whom had witnessed or known of Jesus' great miracles, placed more palm branches on the pathway in front of Him (thus, the name "Palm Sunday") and shouted to Him as He passed, "'Hosanna to the Son of David!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matthew 21:7-9). ("Hosanna" or Hoshana means "Deliver us!")" – Ted Montgomery

The Passover lamb was then inspected for four days in public view to make sure it was perfect, without blemish.

For four days, the Pesach lamb was kept in public view at the temple for everyone to examine to make sure that it was perfect and without defect. During the same four days, the chief priests, elders, Pharisees, and Sadducees interrogated Jesus; but He always left them speechless, because they could find no fault with His impeccable logic and character (Matthew 21:23-27, 22:23-46, 26:59,60). Moreover, after Jesus was arrested, Pilate (governor of Jerusalem) and Herod (governor of Galilee) could find no evidence against Him nor fault with Him (Matthew 27:22,23; Luke 23:4; John 19:4,6). This is because Jesus was perfect and without defect, just as the Passover lamb was expected to be.

At the same time that Pilate said, "I find no fault in this man," Caiaphas declared the national Passover lamb to be spotless. (Luke 23:4)

### The Preparation and "Last Supper"

Jesus sent His disciples to the location for His last celebration of Passover to prepare for the dinner, a day before the rest of the Jews would be celebrating it. (John 18:28) (Yes, Mark 14:12 is a problem.)

In preparation for the Passover, the household is supposed to be free from all leaven (Ex. 12:15). In addition to the traditional extremely thorough housecleaning, the children play a game before the Passover dinner searching the house for bread crumbs, which are carefully placed and verified clean afterward, by the parents. In 2 Kings 22-23, we read of King Josiah who cleared the entire nation of "leaven" before the best Passover in history by removing all of the pagan shrines.



This practice symbolizes the necessity of our considering every part of our lives and removing every sin we find.

### High Points of the Passover Seder:

(We essentially know what Jesus' exact words were as he led his disciples in celebrating the Passover we call "The Last Supper.")

Although women are not allowed to do anything religious in Judaism, a woman lights the candles to begin the Passover, symbolizing that a woman brought the Light into the world.

In the early part of the ceremony, the leader takes three pieces of matzah and wraps them into a three separate compartments within a white linen cloth. Note the appearance of matzah: it has stripes and holes. Soon afterward, the leader takes the middle piece out (Father, **Son**, Holy Spirit), breaks it in half, and replaces one half back into its spot. The other half he takes and wraps into another white linen cloth (graveclothes) and hides it (buries it) underneath something until it is needed again later.

In the Gospels, the passages on which we base the Lord's supper (e.g., Mark 14:22-25) relate to the time of the third (of four) cups of wine in the Passover celebration. At that time the leader (and Jesus at the last supper) takes the hidden piece of bread back out and strikes it in his hand, giving a piece to each person. The blessing the leader says at this time is, "Blessed art thou, Oh Lord our God, King of the universe, **who brings forth bread from the earth.**"

That is when Jesus said, "...this is my body...", specifically associating Himself with that picture in the ceremony, and once again predicting His own body's treatment in the coming hours and His resurrection.

Then the leader (and Jesus) takes the third cup of wine and sprinkles some of it onto the white plate. That is when Jesus said, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

### Jesus' Crucifixion and Events Related:

As Jesus was dying, Luke says that the sun was obscured (Luke 23:45). It's not clear what caused it, but it definitely **was not** a solar eclipse, since the moon was full, as Passover is *always* 14 days after the new moon, by definition.

Jesus died at 3PM, along with the national Passover lamb and every household sacrifice being prepared for the holy dinner.

At that same time, the veil on the Holy of Holies was torn top to bottom. (Mt. 27:51, Mk. 15:38, and Lk. 23:45).

In the inner court of the temple in Jerusalem, in the Holy of Holies, was the Ark of the Covenant. That was where the high priest would go once a year

to offer atonement for the sins of the people. A veil, a very thick, woven curtain, separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple.

When **Jesus** died on **the cross** as a sacrifice for our sins, that heavy curtain was torn from top to bottom. It was not ripped from bottom to top, as though a man were ripping it. Instead, it was ripped from top to bottom, because God was ripping it.

God was saying, "You no longer are on the outside. You can come in. My Son has made a way for you."

The apostle Paul explained how we can now draw near to God:

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. (Hebrews 10:19–22)

The veil was torn. Jesus is now our Intercessor. We don't have to go through a person to reach God anymore. We don't have to go through rituals anymore. Instead, Jesus made a new and living way for us to reach God.

### Jesus' Burial:

In the late afternoon, the soldiers broke the legs of the two criminals, but when they got to Jesus they saw He was already dead, so they didn't break His. This not only fulfilled Ps. 34:20, "He keeps all of his bones, not one of them is broken" (probably not even recognized as a messianic prophecy until after Jesus fulfilled it), **but also most importantly fulfills the instructions regarding the preparation of the lamb in Exodus 12:46, "nor are you to break any bone of it."** Jesus could not have been the perfect Passover Lamb for all of mankind had even a single bone been broken during the horribly gruesome and violent process of His torture and death.

We often hear about the paucity of external references about Jesus' life and death. **Recently, there was a copy of the Talmud found and purchased by Tyndale House** (Munich Talmud manuscript of at b.San.43a) that shows, among other redactions, "passages censored out of printed editions, including the controversial trial of "Yeshu Notzeri". Chronological analysis of the layers in this tradition suggests that the oldest words are: **"On the eve of Passover they hung Jesus of Nazareth for sorcery and leading Israel astray."**

Since the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, a high Sabbath, was about to begin, they had to quickly get Jesus off the cross and buried. There was not time to do all of the usual pre-burial rituals and preparations.

### Jesus' Resurrection:

And since that high Sabbath was followed by a weekly Sabbath, they could not do anything additional to the body for two more days. Thus, on the first day of the week (Sunday), they went to the grave to finish the burial preparations.

According to John 20:1, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb, before sunrise on Sunday morning and found the gravestone already moved away. Thus, **Jesus was raised from the dead sometime before dawn on that Sunday morning.**

He was in the grave part of Thursday, all of Friday and Saturday, as well as all of Thursday and Friday nights, and part of Saturday night, fulfilling His prophecy in Matthew 12:38-41. **If He was crucified on Friday, he could not have fulfilled the prophecy.**

After Jesus was resurrected, Matthew (27:52-53) says that the tombs were opened and that **many dead saints were resurrected.** This miraculous (and creepy) event was literally Jesus' first fruits offering to the Father. See also 1 Cor. 15:20.

## Pentecost or Weeks

Main point – It's all about the second harvest.

Jewish name – Shavuot

Scripture reference – Lev. 23:15-21

Special note – Pilgrim Festival (required to go to Jerusalem)

Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Passover. The Jewish calendar date is: Sivan 6. On our calendar, it ranges from May to June. The next date is Sunday, May 24, 2015.

The theme of Pentecost is the culmination of redemption. For the OT Jews, it was the giving of the Law and the beginning of the wheat harvest. For Christians, it is the coming of the Holy Spirit and the first great harvest of new believers.

**Pentecost just completes the transition from the Law to the Spirit that started during Jesus' crucifixion when the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom.**

For both the fleeing children of Israel and for the believers in Jesus as their Messiah, Pentecost is the culmination of the transition from one way to another. From being slaves in Egypt to being a new people with their own laws and religion. From being under the law to being indwelt by the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4 – <sup>1</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.** <sup>3</sup>For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He

condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>**in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**

Old Testament event – Ex. 32:28 – Giving of the Law. About three thousand men were killed by the Levites when Moses came down from the mountain and found the children of Israel worshipping the golden calf.

Messianic fulfillment – Acts 2:41 – Giving of Holy Spirit. About three thousand souls were saved when Peter preached on in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

2 Cor. 3:6 – who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; **for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

Notes:

## Interlude ... (Summer)

Scripture reference – Leviticus 23:22

As you can see, Jesus has fulfilled the first four feasts, but there are three that remain. During this "summer" period, you can see that God makes provision for the non-Jews, and thus the "Gentile period". This is pictured in the Pentecost with the offering of two equal loaves of bread (Lev. 23:17) and in verse 22, which is completely out of context unless understood in this way.

## Fall Feasts

These feasts focus on the second advent of the Messiah.

Note how these dates and feasts are a mirror of the spring feasts, just six months later. And as was the case with the first three feasts, they are essentially one feast with three distinct parts.

## Trumpets

Main point – Be ready!

Jewish name – Rosh Hashanah, or Head of the Year (Civil New Year). It is better called Yom Teruah, or Feast of Trumpets (**Day of Noise**).

Scripture reference – Lev. 23:23-25

The Feast of Trumpets falls on the first day of the seventh month. The Jewish calendar date is: 1 Tishri. On our calendar, it ranges September to October. The next date is September 14, 2015.

The meaning of Trumpets is judgment. For the OT Jews, it was a call to repentance. For Christians, it is a reminder to **be ready** for Christ's return. **New beginnings** is an overall theme.

Old Testament event – Creation of Adam and Eve.

Messianic fulfillment – The rapture of the church.

There are four primary types of shofar blasts:

1. *Tekiah* - A long single blast (the sound of the King's coronation)
2. *Shevarim* - Three short wail-like blasts (signifying repentance)
3. *Teru'ah* - Nine staccato blasts of alarm (to awaken the soul)
4. *Tekiah ha-Gadol* - A great long blast (for as long as you can blow!)

[http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall\\_Holidays/Rosh\\_Hashannah/rosh\\_hashannah.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall_Holidays/Rosh_Hashannah/rosh_hashannah.html)

[Play video of shofar blasts.]

Special note – First day of the civil calendar year. Supposed by the Jews to have been the first day of creation in the first year. Further, some Jewish thought suggests that there would be 7000 years of history (supported by Ps. 90:4, with NT reference by Peter in 1 Peter 3:8, which is definitely in the context of end times), with 2000 years from creation to Abraham, 2000 more years to the Messiah, and then 2000 years of the church age, followed by a 1000 year “Sabbath rest”. Currently (2014) we are in the Jewish year 5775, but Jewish historians admit that somewhere between 165 and 220 years were removed from being counted, ostensibly to minimize the shame of years of suffering and captivity, but secretly to break the prophetic tie between the predicted time of the Messiah and Jesus’ life on earth.

Matt. 24:29-31 – <sup>29a</sup>“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, <sup>30</sup>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. <sup>31</sup>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.”

1 Cor. 15:51-52 – <sup>51</sup>Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup>in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last **trumpet**; for the **trumpet** will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

1 Thess. 4:16 – For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **trumpet** of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

Notes: In every one of these passages, the critical message to the believers is, “**Be ready!!!**”

## Atonement

Main point – It’s all about confession and repentance.

Jewish name – Yom Kippur

Scripture reference – Lev. 16 and 23:26-32

Yom Kippur is celebrated on 10 Tishri. On our calendar, it is usually in September. The next date is September 23, 2015.

The meaning of the Day of Atonement is blood sacrifice as payment for sin.

Old Testament event – The high priest entered the Holy of Holies only on this day each year to offer blood sacrifice to gain the forgiveness of sin for the nation of Israel.

Beginning on Yom Teruah, the Jews would spend the 10 “Days of Awe” in repentance in preparation for the Day of Atonement. Their belief was that the Book of Life and the Book of Death were sealed on Yom Teruah, but that with sincere confession and repentance during those 10 days they could turn God’s heart.

Yom Kippur is a fast day, not a feast day. Beginning at the evening, they would begin a period of fasting and confessing sin, and would continue that all night. Their goal was to be worthy to have their name written in the Book of Life. (Note that Christians already have their names in the Book of Life!)

On the day, the high priest would sacrifice a bull for his sins and then sacrifice one of two goats for the sins of the nation of Israel. He would then confess the sins of all the people over the head of the other goat and then it was taken outside of the city into the wilderness and released. It is the scapegoat.

According to the Talmud, a scarlet cord was tied around the neck of the scapegoat that was reported to have turned white as the goat was led away from city. However, for the last forty years before the Temple was destroyed (in AD 70), the scarlet cord failed to change color.

To see the full sense of how Jesus was the final and only adequate sacrifice, read Hebrews 8-10.

Heb. 9:11-14 – <sup>11</sup>But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, **He entered** through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; <sup>12</sup>and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup>For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>how much more will the

blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Messianic fulfillment – The national restoration of Israel at the end of the Great Tribulation period. The feast has already been fulfilled in the lives of believers. The prophetic fulfillment will be for the nation of Israel.

Romans 11:24-31 – <sup>24</sup>For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree? <sup>25</sup>For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; <sup>26</sup>and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. <sup>27</sup>AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” <sup>28</sup>From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; <sup>29</sup>for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. <sup>30</sup>For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, <sup>31</sup>so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.

Note that this doesn’t mean that God is just going to say, “Yes, I know you missed my Messiah, but it’s OK. Come on in. You’re all saved now.” There is no salvation outside of Jesus. So somehow the Jews will be faced with the fact that they missed Him and will repent and receive Jesus as the Messiah.

It will be amazing to see how God actually accomplishes this, but it well could be that the shock and awe of The Church being removed from the planet at the Feast of Trumpets somehow causes the Jews to recognize Jesus as the true Messiah. And then they will spend the “ten days of awe” begging God for mercy to get their names written in The Book. It would probably be helpful if the Jews had regained the temple mound by that time so they could reinstitute the temple sacrifices and have even more reason to return en masse to Jerusalem, the epicenter of this event.

Notes:

## Tabernacles (or Booths)

Jewish name – Sukkoth

Scripture reference – Lev. 23:33-44

Special note – Pilgrim Festival (required to go to Jerusalem)

Sukkoth is celebrated beginning on Tishri 15 for seven days. The Jewish calendar date is: 15 Tishri. On our calendar, it ranges from September to October. The next date is September 28, 2015.

The meaning of Tabernacles is renewed fellowship with God. For the OT Jews, it a reminder of the children of Israel living in tents for forty years and a celebration of the fruit harvest. For Christians, it is the future kingdom.

Old Testament event – Wandering in the wilderness for forty years.

Messianic fulfillment – All of God’s people living together in the Messiah’s reign on the earth.

Notes:

## One more thing...:

There’s another interesting parallel that we can consider at the end of this study, as well. The feast calendar also corresponds quite well with key events in the conception, development, and birth of a baby. Look at the right three columns in the table “Feasts Calendar” to see the correlation.

(An “ideal year” is a year in which the first new moon after the Spring Equinox is actually on that day, starting the Jewish year, and thus putting Nisan 1 on March 21.)

It’s actually pretty unlikely that Jesus was born on December 25, as implied by the table, but it’s interesting nonetheless.

## Conclusion

There are three takeaways from this study:

- Nearly all of the writers of the NT had lived these annual rituals since they had been born. Knowing the background and meaning of the feasts will dramatically expand our understanding of what they wrote.
- See God’s careful precision with which He designed and fulfilled the feasts over thousands of years should encourage us to know He can and will be with us at ever point of need in our lives, as well.
- Knowing more about the Jewish religion can better equip us to tell our Jewish friends about their Messiah.

So there.