

Celebrate

the Feasts of the Lord

by David Liesenfelt

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Published by Peacefield International, Inc.
www.peacefieldinternational.com

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Printed in the United States of America

A **1412church** APPROVED PUBLICATION

Introduction

In the beginning, God said, “Let Us make man in Our Image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion” (Genesis 1:26). As much as this is a statement of what God did then, it is also a statement of what God continues to do today.

The Bible tells us, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Yet despite our shortcomings, God is determined to create us in His image and likeness (Romans 8:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:47-49, 1 John 3:2; Ephesians 4:13). It is this desire that has brought about the redemption we find in Jesus Christ.

God the Father is bringing many sons and daughters to glory through Jesus. The plan that began with creation continues with Jesus as our Savior, our Redeemer, the Resurrection and Life, our Hope, our King and Lord, our High Priest and Mediator, our Advocate and Judge, the One through whom all things are being reconciled in heaven and earth. Jesus is the center point of everything God the Father is doing. He is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

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As Christians, how much do we appreciate Jesus in all the roles He plays in our lives? The gospel of Jesus Christ celebrates not only His work as Savior, but also as our King and Lord. It celebrates not only that He was risen from the dead, but that He now serves as High Priest and Mediator between us and God. It not only celebrates the hope we have in Him by the Holy Spirit, but also that He is the perfect Judge who will make decisions of eternal life for everyone who has ever lived. There is so much to celebrate about Jesus and the work of salvation God is accomplishing through Him.

God wants us to commemorate all these facets of the gospel, and so He set forth holidays to celebrate the great and marvelous

things He is doing through Jesus. We serve an incredible God who knows the end from the beginning, who set up holidays in advance of the actual events happening. Wow. Mankind sets up celebrations and holidays to remember momentous occasions, like Independence Day here in the United States, but God has the ability to set up celebrations in advance of the events themselves.

How amazing was it that Jesus died on the very day of Passover, a holiday that was celebrated long before Jesus became the Lamb slain? How amazing was it that He was resurrected on the very day of Firstfruits that had been celebrated for centuries as the beginning of the harvest? How incredible was it that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon Jesus' disciples in power on the very day of Pentecost, the very holiday God said to celebrate over 1,000 years before this momentous event?

We serve an amazing God who has wonderful plans to bring you, me and all who desire life with Him to salvation. God is taking us from dust to glory, making us into the image of His Son. And He has set up holidays so we can celebrate each of the momentous events and works that bring the whole gospel to fruition. God created holidays, His feast days, so we would always remember, and always celebrate, the great things He is doing through Jesus Christ.

In this book, let's get back to the Bible, back to the heart of God, to give a brief overview of what His holidays are, and what they mean for Christians today. I invite you to join me in celebrating the greatest holidays a believer in Jesus will ever know... the ones that detail His complete plan of salvation for mankind, a plan that God the Father will accomplish through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Let's begin!

1 | God has holidays?

Growing up in the Christian church, I celebrated many holidays, such as Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter, Pentecost, Christmas and others. While these holidays and special occasions had meaning to me, ultimately I came to find that, of these holidays, only Pentecost was specifically mentioned in the Bible. And with that came a question, Why would we as Christians celebrate holidays not mentioned in the Bible as part of our Christian faith, while at the same time ignore the holidays God created and set aside in the Bible to celebrate?

Unfortunately, we have mixed many man-made practices into the Christian faith. Even worse, some of these practices actually come from the worship of other gods, like Christmas, which was a time for worshipping the sun, or Easter, which is actually named after a goddess of fertility. And if you are just hearing that for the first time, now you know why bunnies and eggs are so important!

As we begin to look into God's Word about His feasts, we are going to discover something amazing: Each of God's holidays celebrates specific events of the gospel and His plan of salvation for mankind. In fact, you will find that by knowing the feasts and what they picture, you will have a better understanding of – and hopefully celebrate – every aspect of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is interesting to note that the Apostle Paul actually bypassed opportunities to further preach the gospel and truth on two evangelism trips in order to make it back to Jerusalem to celebrate these feasts (Acts 18:20-21; Acts 20:16).

So what are God's holidays? They are mentioned throughout the Bible, but a complete list is given in Leviticus 23. Leviticus 23:2 says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations [meetings], these are My feasts." And again in Leviticus 23:4, "These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times."

So what are the feasts and celebrations of the Lord and when are they held?

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

Sabbath
Passover
Feast of Unleavened Bread
Firstfruits
Pentecost
Feast of Trumpets
Day of Atonement
Feast of Tabernacles
Eighth Day

The Sabbath is the one feast that is celebrated every week. God created the Sabbath by blessing and sanctifying (making holy) the seventh day of the week at creation (Genesis 2:1-3). He declares that the Sabbath is a feast (Leviticus 23:2-3), a sign between Him and His people (Exodus 31:13-17), and a commandment (Exodus 20:8-11). Jesus proclaimed that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28).

The other celebrations are held annually, at the time of the spring and fall harvests in the northern hemisphere.

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are celebrated at the beginning of spring, at the initiation of the spring grain harvest. The offering of the firstfruits during the Days of Unleavened Bread is the first sheath of that grain harvested for the year. The offering of firstfruits also begins a count of fifty days to the day of Pentecost, which occurs near the end of spring.

The Feast of Trumpets occurs as summer comes to an end and fall begins. It is followed by the Day of Atonement ten days later, and then the Feast of Tabernacles and Eighth Day bring an end to the holidays God set aside for us to celebrate.

As we learn more, we will see how God tied His feasts to the spring and fall harvests in order to give us a clear picture of His

entire plan of salvation for all mankind. Jesus said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2). God is bringing forth a great harvest of which you and I are to be part.

Below is a chart to help you more clearly see when each celebration occurs.

FEAST DAY	DATE OF CELEBRATION	
	HEBREW CALENDAR	GREGORIAN CALENDAR
SABBATH	ON THE 7 TH DAY OF EVERY WEEK	
PASSOVER	DAY 14/MONTH 1	MAR/APR
FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD	DAYS 15-21/MONTH 1	MAR/APR
FIRSTFRUITS	OFFERED ON THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH, DURING THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD	MAR/APR
PENTECOST	50 DAYS AFTER THE OFFERING OF FIRSTFRUITS	MAY/JUNE
FEAST OF TRUMPETS	DAY 1/MONTH 7	SEP/OCT
DAY OF ATONEMENT	DAY 10/MONTH 7	SEP/OCT
FEAST OF TABERNACLES	DAYS 15-21/MONTH 7	SEP/OCT
EIGHTH DAY	DAY 22/MONTH 7	SEP/OCT

Now let’s dig into the Scriptures to find out what it all means.

2 | The Sabbath

The first feast celebration that the Lord God declares to be one of His is the Sabbath. In Leviticus 23:3 God said, “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.”

The Sabbath is the first celebration of remembrance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Sabbath reminds us that there is a God, and He is the Creator of all things. Hebrews 11:6 says, “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

The Sabbath is a sign of remembrance that we believe there is a God who reveals Himself as the Creator. God blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the week after six days of creating the heavens and the earth. Acknowledging the seventh day as being holy and separate is a sign that we believe in the God who declares himself Creator of everything. If we believe that God made the sun, the moon, the stars, the grass, the trees, the plants, and every living creature on the first six days of creation, we must also believe that He made the seventh day holy on the seventh day of creation.

Notice what God says about the Sabbath as a sign in Exodus 31:13-17, “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel

forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”

It also became one of the signs between Gentiles and those who were not physically circumcised children of Israel, but those who were grafted in by faith in action as recorded in Isaiah 56:1-7, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.’ Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD speak, saying, ‘The LORD has utterly separated me from His people’; nor let the eunuch say, ‘Here I am, a dry tree.’ For thus says the LORD: ‘To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants — everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant — even them I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

The Sabbath was created for mankind, to be a sign of our faith that we truly believe in God as Creator. God commanded us to remember it, and He made it to be a gift to us, to give us rest from our weekly labors and have rest with Him. It is a weekly holiday where we spend time honoring God and pursuing fellowship with Him and others, giving rest and mercy to others as we are able (Exodus 20:8-11; Mark 2:27-28; Isaiah 58:13-14; Matthew 12:1-13; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-6).

Jesus knew how to keep the Sabbath; it was something He made. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing

was made that was made” (John 1:1-3). The book of Colossians adds, “For by Him [Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16).

The Sabbath was made through Jesus and for Jesus. It is one of the first great revelations of the gospel. There is a God and Father who created all things seen and unseen through the One we know as Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. This weekly celebration is for us to remember that God made the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh, showing Himself as Creator of all things. This is the very first belief of the gospel, and God commanded that it be remembered and celebrated every week.

The Sabbath is such a beautiful day of intimacy between us and God. We only know about this special holiday (holy-day) because we believe His Word. The scientific method will never help us know that the seventh day is the Sabbath. It does not look, taste, smell, sound or feel different. We only know the seventh day is the Sabbath because we believe in the revelation of God. We believe the Bible is His word. And we believe that He made the seventh day holy because He said He did.

The Sabbath is one of the first great revelations of the gospel.

If we believe that God made the heavens and earth on the first six days of creation, we should also believe that He made the seventh day holy on the seventh day of creation. All this knowledge comes by revelation of God, as spoken through Moses to us in the holy scriptures. The question is, do we believe it? Do we believe God is Creator? Do we believe that He truly made all things through Jesus Christ, and that all things were made for Jesus Christ? Do we therefore accept His word and remember that the seventh day is set apart as holy by God for you and me?

The Sabbath is a celebration of the very first step of the gospel. Do we believe there is a God who made all things? And do we believe God when He says He made things we cannot see, hear, smell, taste or touch? Let us remember to keep the Sabbath holy, to honor God, and to celebrate this great feast. Our loving Creator God set apart a day where we cease from work to have a time of fellowship with Him and others.

3 | Passover

The first annual feast that God commanded was Passover. It is the fourteenth day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar, which occurs in either March or April on the Gregorian calendar. While it is a feast day, it is not a holy day where God said not to work. Customary work can be done on Passover. It is an important and necessary preparation day for the seven-day feast that follows it.

Historically, Passover was a very significant day for the Israelites. They had been held in slavery in Egypt for 400 years. When Moses was sent to free them, God did many mighty signs, pouring out plagues on the Egyptians to show that He is God. The ten plagues culminated with the most severe plague of all, the death of the firstborn in every household of Egypt.

God told the Israelites that He would pass through Egypt at midnight on Passover and strike all the firstborn, but when He saw blood applied to a house, He would pass over that house, and no death would come to its firstborn inhabitants. The Israelites were to take an innocent lamb into their homes on the tenth day of the first month, and on the fourteenth day, the lamb was slain, its blood was applied to the doorposts, and the lamb was eaten in haste (Exodus 12).

Once God passed through the land, bringing death to all who didn't apply the blood of the lamb and giving life to every household that did, the Egyptians let the Israelites go free. In fact, not only did the Passover signal a day of freedom and redemption for a nation, but the Israelites were given many valuables by the Egyptians, including gold, silver and livestock to take with them as they left. Not only did God free them, He blessed them with possessions on the way out.

For Christians today, this historical type has tremendous meaning for us. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." In Passover, we as Christians celebrate the reality that Jesus died for us; He willingly paid the price for our sins to give us the hope of eternal life.

In the book of Romans, God tells us how He redeems us from slavery to sin and death by the blood of Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23-26 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

Just as God passed over the houses in Egypt, so does He pass over our sins, and the death we deserve as a result of those sins, when we have faith in Jesus Christ. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life.” For an Israelite to be saved in Egypt, he needed to believe that applying the blood of the Passover lamb to his house would make the difference. In the same way, it is by believing in the blood of Jesus, and applying it to our lives, that we are set free from sin and death.

God promises that when we believe in Him and the work He accomplishes through Jesus, we pass from death to life. John 5:24 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

Just as God did not judge those who applied the Passover lamb’s blood in Egypt, so will God not apply judgment for sin to you when you believe in Jesus Christ and apply His blood to your life in faith. Romans 6:20-23 says, “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

While we may not have grown up as physical slaves in this world, we were all born into slavery to sin and death (John 8:31-

36). As we read in Romans 3:23, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” However, God determined that even though we sinned against Him, He would save us from the ultimate effect of sin... death. God does not want us to die; He wants us to have eternal life. God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to save it (John 3:17).

Passover is such a tremendous and sobering celebration because Jesus Christ gave His life as a ransom to set us free. He was perfect, without sin, the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 1:19). God’s love is so readily available to us. The question is, do we accept His love for us? Do we receive it and know that His sacrifice was more than enough to make us holy and give us life? Jesus died to free us, and the benefit He receives is only fulfilled when we believe that His sacrifice makes us righteous in the eyes of God. By faith, we are perfectly free from sin and death and found holy and accepted in the Beloved, Jesus (Ephesians 1:3-7). We leave slavery not only being washed from sin, but carrying out with us the riches of Christ, His perfect righteousness imputed to us.

*Do we receive
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While the work of the cross was finished when Jesus died, the final fulfillment is yet to come. Jesus said, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16). When Jesus said this, He instituted the bread as His body and the wine as His blood, the Lord’s Supper, telling us to eat and drink in remembrance of Him.

Matthew 26:26-29 says, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For

this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.”

Each Passover we take of the Lord's Supper, humbling ourselves and washing one another's feet as Jesus did (John 13:1-17). We do this knowing that the ultimate fulfillment of His sacrifice is found when we all eat and drink with Him in His kingdom. We have tremendous promises, not only of life with Jesus, but of heavenly riches that we will inherit when we are resurrected and we see Him face to face (Ephesians 1:17-18; 1 John 3:2).

Passover is a celebration of the redemption we find in Christ Jesus. Do we accept Jesus as our Passover? Do we believe His sacrifice and shed blood is enough to free us from this world, to give us liberty from sin and death? God our Father wants us to know and believe that He has provided us freedom from sin and life everlasting through His Son, Jesus. When we each individually, by faith, apply the blood of His sacrifice to our lives, we receive the benefits of His blessing and grace, for ourselves and to share with others.

Just as He did with the Israelites, God sends us out today with the riches of His grace, with a new, abundant life in Christ Jesus. In the age to come, we shall be raised in newness of life. The covenant that was founded in His shed blood will be fulfilled when we rise up to live with Him forever.

4 | Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of Unleavened Bread – also called the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Passover, and sometimes just Passover (which can be confusing) – is a seven-day feast that occurs immediately after the day of Passover. The first and seventh days are set apart as holy days of rest where no customary work is to be done. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a celebration that occurs because of the work of the Passover Lamb.

Historically, the Israelites began their exodus out of Egypt immediately after Passover, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Exodus 12:39 says of the Israelites, “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves.” Exodus 13:3, 6-9 says, “And Moses said to the people: ‘Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten... Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, ‘This is done because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.’ It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD’s law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt.”

Does it seem curious that God would have the Israelites celebrate their freedom from slavery by having them abstain from all leaven, and eat only unleavened bread for seven days? He is showing us something so significant. What they normally ate was going to change. Leaven, a common ingredient in bread, was to be removed, and something completely different was to be eaten.

In freeing the Israelites after 400 years of bondage, God was taking them out of everything they knew... away from oppression, away from slavery, away from their homes, away from their normal food, away from all the gods of Egypt. Passover changed everything for the Israelites. God was now taking them out of their comfort zones to build a relationship of faith and trust in Him. He would now be their God, to lead and guide them through the wilderness. God would be their provision, their source of protection, their leader and guide.

In the same way for us today, the work of Jesus Christ in Passover changes everything in our lives. The Apostle Paul showed us much of the spiritual meaning when God inspired him to speak about keeping this feast. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 says, "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Having been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, we now find in Him the meaning of life. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Now, having found salvation from sin in Him, we are no longer to walk in sin (Romans 6:11-16).

In Jesus Christ, we are to come out of all we have known in this world, in decisions we have made according to the desires of our eyes, the desires of our flesh, and our pride (1 John 2:15-17). Now we find all our life in Him, apart from sin and selfishness, giving ourselves completely and wholly unto God. Romans 12:1-2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

In the Feast of Unleavened Bread we celebrate not only the complete removal of sin in our lives, but the blessing of Jesus righteousness imputed unto us. We rejoice that we live by faith and our choices begin to reflect our faith. We celebrate that we have been made “unleavened” by Jesus work and we no longer eat of the leaven of malice and wickedness, but we eat of the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. That is, in our heart and in our thoughts, we live pure, sincere lives; we put off any malice. And in our actions and words, we live true and holy lives; we put off any wickedness.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32). The reality of this happens as we come out of the world to live a new life in Jesus. The scriptures refer to this as repentance. It is the goodness of God, and His work through Jesus, that leads us to repentance, to turn from our old ways to His perfect way. Just as Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for us, we are now to lay down our lives as a sacrifice for Him. And as we now look to Him above all other gods, and above all other things of this world (money, food, house, career, power, fame, etc.), we find a life completely different than the one in which we were comfortable before we knew Him.

1 Peter 4:1-4 says, “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer

should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.”

Just as Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for us, we are now to lay down our lives as a sacrifice for Him.

As we celebrate this feast and the new life we have in Jesus, we look ahead to a time when not just believers in a world of non-believers will know, but all will come to know the LORD and His truth. Jeremiah 31:33-34 says, “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

A time is coming when all will know the Lord. He will teach mankind to put down all malice and wickedness and learn how to truly consider one another in sincerity and truth. Micah 4:1-3 says, “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

Just as God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, so God brings us out of slavery to the ways of this world and sin. Are you embracing the new life found in Jesus Christ? Are you celebrating the fact that by His sacrifice and resurrection, He not only freed us from sin, but He shows us how to live a new life in Him? Let’s look upon Him and be changed (2 Corinthians 3:18)!

In this feast we celebrate the liberty and the new life we have in Christ Jesus. And we celebrate not only what God has done for us, but what is yet to come, a time when all will know God. It is a time when malice and wickedness will be put away and all will walk in sincerity and truth.

5 | The Firstfruits

On the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread, God commanded that a very important offering of firstfruits be made to Him. In Leviticus 23:10-14, He says, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.’”

Since God said you could not eat of the harvest until this offering was made, how important do you think this was to the Israelites? For those entering the land, who regarded God and His commandments, this offering was essential to enjoying the fruits of their labor. In fact, without this offering, there would be no receiving of the harvest.

For Christians today, the offering of firstfruits is one of the most vital, if not THE most vital, aspects of our faith. 1 Corinthians 15:17-22 says, “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

Our whole faith is founded in the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead after three days and three nights in the grave (Matthew 12:39-40). And as Jesus was sacrificed on Passover, so he was also raised from the dead after three days and three nights in the grave, at the beginning of the first day of the week (Mark 16:9).

He was the offering of firstfruits, the firstborn from the dead, that allows the rest of the harvest to be received (1 Corinthians 15:20; Colossians 1:18). On the day of His resurrection, “Jesus said to her [Mary], ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17).

So as Christians today, we gather on the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread to celebrate the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We celebrate because it is His resurrection that shows us His power over sin and death. His resurrection gives us confirmation that He has overcome the world and our sins. He is the firstfruits, waved for acceptance on our behalf before God (Leviticus 23:11). And His resurrection gives us the assurance of our resurrection to life as well. Our faith is not futile. He is risen!

As we celebrate the offering of firstfruits, do we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead? Do we trust that He overcame sin and death, that He showed His power to lay

down His life and take it up again? Do we see how His resurrection power is the very power that causes us to overcome sin and death and live in glorious, eternal life with Him? This is all part of the message of the resurrection and the Days of Unleavened Bread, during which His resurrection is celebrated.

As we celebrate the offering of firstfruits, do we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead?

As Christians, we look to the future and celebrate this hope for all mankind. The fulfillment of this offering is that He is the firstborn among many brethren to come (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5-6). “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then those who are Christ’s at His coming, then comes the end” (1 Corinthians 15:22-24).

What a wonderful and joyous celebration. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!

6 | Pentecost

Pentecost – also known as the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Firstfruits – occurs exactly fifty days after the offering of the firstfruits during the days of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:15-17 says, “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”

This Feast of Weeks occurs exactly seven weeks after the offering of firstfruits was made. It is also a holy day when no customary work should be done. For the physical Israelites, it marked the time of celebration after the first harvest was gathered. The offering on Pentecost was also an offering of firstfruits to the LORD, although unlike the offering of firstfruits that was offered during the Days of Unleavened Bread, this offering was actually baked *with leaven*.

This holiday proved to be one of the most significant days to Christians who were gathered together on this feast after the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Acts 2:1-4 says of Jesus’

disciples, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

The Holy Spirit was not only the Comforter that Jesus promised He would send to convict, teach and guide the disciples (John 14-16), but the Holy Spirit was the assurance that they were now Jesus’ own disciples, and God’s own children, having the promise of eternal life. Romans 8:9, 11, 14-16 says, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His... But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

When the disciples received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached the gospel to those who were there and told them that if they would believe and be baptized, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). The promised Holy Spirit gives us the assurance of our standing in Jesus Christ and the promise of what is to come... a future time of redemption of the body. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

And again in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 it says, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our

habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.”

So for Christians today, we celebrate Pentecost knowing that we have received the adoption of the Holy Spirit by which we have become children of God. And we further rejoice in the future, knowing that we celebrate a time when we shall receive the redemption of our bodies in Jesus. As God inspired Paul to write in Romans 8:23, “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

What a glorious hope we have, and what assurances have been given to you and me. The Holy Spirit is our guide in this life and the assurance of the promise of a new life, free from the corruption and mortality of this world. We have the assurance of the resurrection of the dead and the promise of eternal life.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

As Jesus is the firstfruits, being the first to have fallen asleep [died] and be raised from the dead, so shall all those who are Christ’s be resurrected at His coming. We have a tremendous hope that though we shall die, yet shall we be raised to live forever because of the awesome work that Christ has done on our behalf.

And as Jesus was the beginning of the resurrection, the firstborn from the dead, a type of firstfruits, so are those who are set apart by belief in Him a type of firstfruits in the resurrection. “These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever

He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4).

Leviticus 23:20 identifies these firstfruits, gathered at the end of the first harvest, “as holy to the LORD for the priest”. And so it shall be with all who believe in Jesus. We were set apart by faith in Him to be holy for Jesus, our High Priest. And as we find our lives in Him, so we find eternal life in Him, to be kings and priests unto our God and unto the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

“Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 1:4-6).

So as we gather to celebrate the feast, the questions to ask are, Do I believe Jesus has set me apart as a firstfruit, holy to Him? Have I received the Holy Spirit? Do I believe that Jesus will come to gather together all His firstfruits at His return?

Pentecost is such a wonderful feast and holy day because in it we remember that the church started when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples. We celebrate because by repenting and believing in Jesus, and by being baptized into His name, we have also received the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us adopted sons and daughters of God (Acts 2:38-39; Romans 8:14-17). And we celebrate because we know that the Holy Spirit is the down payment and assurance within us that we have a future redemption coming. We will be resurrected from the dead, caught up in the air, and have a body just like Jesus’ body (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49).

7 | Feast of Trumpets

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD’” (Leviticus 23:24-25).

The Feast of Trumpets is a holy day in which no customary work is to be done, held on the first day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, which occurs in September/October on the Gregorian calendar, as fall begins. This time of year marks the time when the great summer harvest is being gathered in and God brings His people together to celebrate His fall feasts.

The Feast of Trumpets marks a transition between the spring and fall feasts. Whereas the spring feasts center largely around the first coming of Jesus, the fall feasts focus more on His second coming.

Of all the feasts spoken of in the law, this one has the least amount said about it compared to all the others. Yet when we look into the meaning of *blowing of trumpets*, from the Hebrew *teruah*, we find that this feast is so very important to Christians today. The word *teruah* means a very loud sound, like a trumpet blast or a shout. It is by looking at the times of trumpet blasts and shouting in the scriptures that we find the meaning of this day.

Trumpets were used in various ways in the scriptures. They were blown to gather people together and to direct the movements of large groups of people (Numbers 10). Trumpets were used to celebrate feasts and happy occasions, while they were also blown to sound the alarm of war and warn people of impending danger. Amazingly, all of these things are found in the prophetic significance of the Feast of Trumpets.

Studying the Scriptures, we find that *teruah* is used by God to describe an incredible and terrible time that is soon coming upon the earth known as the Day of the Lord. Joel 2:1-2, 10-11

prophesies, “Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations... the earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it?”

The prophet Zephaniah adds of this day of trumpet and alarm, *teruah*, in Zephaniah 1:14-18, “The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. ‘I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse.’ Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.”

The Day of the Lord is a terrible and troubling time that will come upon the earth as a result of sin. In Revelation 8, 9 and 11, Jesus reveals through the apostle John that there will be a blowing of seven trumpets, signaling seven plagues that will bring great devastation upon the earth. In these trumpets we see the destruction of fresh water and sea creatures, grass and plant life, and the very health and life of human beings. Essentially everything we can put our trust in for life on this earth will be shown to not be reliable after all. It is a very distressing time, like

a woman in the travails of childbirth, a time that the world has not seen before. It is a time where men will seek death and not find it, a time of punishment for the sins mankind has committed upon the earth.

In Isaiah 13:6-11, God tells us what the Day of the Lord shall be like and why it shall occur: “Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp, every man’s heart will melt, and they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; they will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; they will be amazed at one another; their faces will be like flames. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. ‘I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.’”

Jesus’ return signals a time of great trouble and judgment for the world, but it also signals a time of great hope for those who love His coming.

Yet it is through all this travail that something tremendous and wonderful happens. Jesus’ return signals a time of great trouble and judgment for the world, but it also signals a time of great hope for those who love His coming. Revelation 11:15-18 says, “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have

taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.”

Jesus will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to rule over all kingdoms and nations of this earth. The time of Satan’s reign on the earth will come to an end, and Jesus and His saints will begin their rule (Revelation 19:1-20:6). His return signals a time of great fear for those who reject Him, but great hope for those who understand the signs of His coming. Luke 21:25-28 records Jesus’ words, “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.”

Matthew 24:29-31 adds, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

So as the earth is in travail, like a woman in the pains of childbirth, children of God shall be resurrected, born, and gathered together unto Jesus. Jesus comes not only to judge the earth and those who destroy it, but He comes to reward His servants, the saints (Revelation 11:15-18).

The Apostle Paul was inspired by God to tell us about the joy and happiness that comes to those who look for Jesus' coming. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.

And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Oh, how comforting these words are to us. While those who reject Christ find wrath and terror, those who know Christ shall be looking up, knowing their redemption draws near. For any who are alive and remain on this earth until His coming will go through a time of great travail on the earth, but rather than being a time of fear of death, we know that this is the time of resurrection and a gathering to Christ.

It is in the midst of war and alarm that Jesus calls and gathers His disciples unto Himself. It is an amazing time that is prophesied, a time of trumpet and shouting and alarm, a time of terror and jubilation. Jesus will put an end to the rule of the devil, to learning the way of selfishness, sin and pride. Jesus will pour out judgment against anyone and anything that stands against the way of genuine love and care. What that time means for you and me comes down to what Jesus means to you and me.

The Feast of Trumpets is a time to reflect on this dichotomy and to ask ourselves, Do we welcome Jesus into our lives? Where Jesus is, sin and selfishness find death. When we welcome Jesus into our lives, He puts an end to these things and we live a

new life according to His ways of love, righteousness, and peace. God is not slow concerning His promise to return, but is desirous that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). For the world, Jesus' coming is resisted because they would rather carry on in their own ways and not repent (Revelation 9:20-21). But for the believing, the coming of the Lord is the time to which we look forward, knowing that it is the time when we shall be with the Lord forever, to have fellowship with Him, to see Him face to face, and to receive the inheritance He has promised to us.

Therefore, on the Feast of Trumpets, let us celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let us remember what His coming means to the world, that the rule of the Devil is ending, and the rulership of Jesus Christ is about to begin. Let's see this prophecy as a warning and witness to ourselves, to make certain that our lives are continually dedicated to Jesus and that we truly regard Him as our Lord. Let us greatly rejoice knowing that our Lord desires that we reign with Him, sharing His way of humility, service, and love to all mankind.

8 | Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement is celebrated nine days after the Feast of Trumpets, on the tenth day of the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar, which occurs in September/October on the Gregorian calendar. While the Feast of Trumpets has very little direct instruction about how to celebrate it in the law compared to the other feasts, the Day of Atonement has a tremendous amount written about it in both the Old and New Testaments.

Leviticus 23:26-32 says, “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.’”

In the scriptures, we find that the phrase *afflict your souls* means to fast, to abstain from eating, and also possibly drinking, in order to humble ourselves before God. This humbling of ourselves is tied to the work of reconciliation and atonement found in this feast day. We are to be celebrating that Jesus does this work in our lives, and how much we need it and appreciate it!

Atonement is not a word we use very often today, but it literally means *a covering*. When Adam and Eve first sinned in the garden of Eden, God made them coverings because they knew they were naked and they were ashamed. In the same manner, the Day of Atonement is a day that celebrates the work of our High Priest to cleanse us from sin and clothe us with His own

righteousness, that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Leviticus 16:30-34 says of the Day of Atonement, “For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father’s place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year. And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.”

The Day of Atonement celebrates the work of the high priest to make atonement for God’s people and for all the accoutrements of worship. The priest made atonement for himself, then took two goats for a sin offering. He cast lots to see which goat would be slain and which goat would be released into the wilderness. The priest slew the goat on which the lot fell, and took of its blood into the holiest place of all, behind the veil in the tabernacle, to make atonement for the holy place. Only the high priest could enter this place and only on this one day of the year. Otherwise, this place where the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat were placed was kept separate from the rest of the holy place by a veil. The high priest sprinkled the blood of the goat on the mercy seat, and also made cleansing for the whole tabernacle of meeting, the altar, all the priests, and all the people (Leviticus 16:7-34).

In the same manner, Jesus Christ entered the true holy place in heaven once for all, although not with the blood of a goat, but with His own blood He entered the holy place, one time for all. Hebrews 9:24-26 says, “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the

Most Holy Place every year with blood of another – He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

According to the law, the high priest then took the second goat and he confessed over that goat all the sins of the people. After laying all the sins of the people on the goat, the goat would bear their iniquities to an uninhabited wilderness, outside the camp and away from the people (Leviticus 16).

In the same manner, Jesus does the same work for us today as our High Priest. Although instead of laying our sins on an animal, Jesus did this work at His crucifixion, when God laid all our sins upon Him. Isaiah 53:5-6, 10-12 says, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all... Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

What tremendous atonement is made by our High Priest, Jesus Christ, who made atonement for us by His own sacrifice. He not only cleanses us from our sins, but also bears all our sins, completely removing them from us. Psalm 103:10-12 says, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

What wonderful grace we have received from God, that He would cleanse us from all our sins. Our sins leave us in a place where we need the ever-present ministry of reconciliation that Jesus performs on our behalf as High Priest.

Sin brings pain, suffering, wrath and death. But Jesus is the answer to give us healing, peace, redemption and life. And just as the return of Jesus brings judgment upon this earth as we celebrate in the Feast of Trumpets, so does Atonement provide reconciliation after the destruction that comes upon the earth.

Jesus prophesied in Matthew 24:22 that unless the days be shortened, no flesh would be saved alive. From the time of the tribulation, through the wrath of God upon the earth, we see that in the end, unless God

heals the earth, no flesh can live.

Revelation 16

prophesies that all the sea and fresh water will turn to blood and every sea creature will

die. There will be tremendous suffering from boils upon mankind, and great darkness will fall upon the earth as man prepares for the great battle against Jesus Himself. But once the battle is won, and Satan is bound, Jesus will begin to reign over those who remain on earth. It will begin with the establishment of true worship, via His cleansing and healing work.

Zechariah 3:8-10 says, “Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription,” says the LORD of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree.’”

Jesus our High Priest will remove the iniquity of the land in one day, as is prophesied in the Day of Atonement, and bring

Atonement provides reconciliation after the destruction that comes upon the earth.

about healing and life. Ezekiel 47:1, 6-9 adds, “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar... He said to me, ‘Son of man, have you seen this?’ Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: ‘This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.’”

Jesus will remove the iniquity of the land. The earth that was made uninhabitable will be healed. The earth will become a place of life again.

The Day of Atonement is such a powerful day, a day of humbling ourselves before God, choosing Him over the things of our flesh and this world. It is a day that celebrates the work of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, who cleanses us from all iniquity and removes our sins far from us. It celebrates His sacrifice, made once for all, a sacrifice that we apply each day when we confess our sins and look to Him in faith to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). And it is a day that celebrates the healing Jesus will bring to this earth after the great judgments of the Feast of Trumpets. Jesus will cleanse the earth and bring about healing and peace for the people of the earth, ushering in His reign with His chosen kings and priests upon the earth (Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10).

9 | Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles is the last great feast in the year, celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, which occurs in September/October on the Gregorian calendar. This is a very special feast of seven days. Leviticus 23:34-36, 39-43 says, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it... ‘Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.’”

The LORD gives two main instructions about the meaning of this seven-day feast. First, it is to be celebrated when you have gathered in your harvest from the land. Fall is the time of the great harvest of the year, when all the produce of the field is harvested. Second, it is a time to remember that God made His children to dwell in booths (temporary dwellings) after He freed them from bondage. It is in these instructions that we find much

spiritual meaning for which to gather and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles as believers in Jesus.

While the spring feasts celebrated the harvest of firstfruits – Jesus Christ in the Days of Unleavened Bread, those who are His firstfruits at Pentecost – the Feast of Tabernacles celebrates the great harvest at the end of the year. In this celebration we learn one of the great truths of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 teaches us, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

When Jesus returns to the earth in power and glory, He will gather together His saints and establish His kingdom on earth. He will begin a process of putting an end to all rule, authority and power that stands against life, liberty, love and righteousness. Revelation 20:6 says that His saints will be priests and reign with him for 1,000 years.

But what happens to those who are not Christ’s at His coming, who are not resurrected upon His return? 1 Corinthians 15:24 declares there is the time of *the end*. The Bible reveals that God has a plan for everyone, even for those who did not hear or accept the gospel during their lives on this earth. God tells us exactly what will happen to those who aren’t believers. The answers may surprise you!

Revelation 20:4-6 confirms that those who are Christ’s at His coming shall live and reign with Him for a thousand years, but notice what it says happens at the end of that period in verse 5, “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.”

Did you know that those who didn’t know Jesus will not live again until the thousand years are finished? Rather than eternal

judgment happening upon death, God actually tells us that the rest of the dead will not live again until the thousand years is finished. What does happen to the non-believers? Notice as Revelation 20:7-15 continues, “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Revelation 20:4-6 tells us that it is better to be a believer and in the first resurrection, because over such the second death has no power. Notice what Jesus said in John 5:24, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

However, for those who are not believers, Jesus tells us that they will enter into judgment. John 5:26-30 continues, “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear

His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

Jesus has been given power by God the Father to judge the rest of the dead. Just like for those who accept Jesus today, it is ONLY through Jesus that any come to have eternal life. He is the door and gate by which we enter in (John 10:7-9). This was what John the Baptist prophesied when he said, “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12).

How will Jesus judge the rest of dead, those who are not His at His coming? The Bible tells us how.

HOW WILL JESUS JUDGE THE REST OF THE DEAD?

BASED ON THEIR RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL	MARK 16:16
BASED ON WHAT THEY KNEW AND WHAT THEY DID WITH WHAT THEY KNEW	LUKE 12:48
BY THEIR OWN CONSCIENCE (EITHER ACCUSING OR EXCUSING)	ROMANS 2:15
BY THEIR OWN WORDS	MATTHEW 12:36
BY THEIR OWN JUDGMENTS (DID THEY FORGIVE OR NOT?)	MATTHEW 6:14-15
BASED ON THEIR TREATMENT OF OTHERS	JAMES 2:8-13 MATTHEW 6:14-15

In Luke 6:38, Jesus said, “For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” It is truly an incredible system of justice. In essence, Jesus will judge each person by his response to Him, and by his own words, works, treatment of others, personal understanding, and conscience. Only God can know the thoughts of man, but it is amazing to think about how truly fair and equitable this judgment is. God will make it so that

every man who enters judgment will be judged by the very way he judged others and lived his life.

While those who believe in Jesus in this life do not enter this judgment for life or death (John 5:24), they will still be rewarded according to their own works in a very similar manner.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 says, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

At the Feast of Tabernacles we remember and celebrate the harvest, and the fruit God is bringing forth in our lives. Our time on this earth matters. God promises that He will bring every work into judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14). For believers, Jesus will render a judgment for a reward based on how we built upon the foundation that is in Him. For those who were not Christ’s at His coming, He will render a judgment of life or death.

So what do we bring forth at the harvest? In Deuteronomy 16:16-17, He says, “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.”

The lesson of dwelling in booths ties into the harvest as a reminder that our time of living on this earth is a short time of maturation. We don’t go from belief in God directly to the promised land. There is a time of sojourning and learning in this life, that we may bring forth fruit to God.

2 Corinthians 4:16-5:4 says, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal

weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.”

Through all the hardships of life – trials, tribulations, tests of faith – God is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He created us to glorify us. As it says in Romans 8:29-30, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Praise God that He made us to be glorified!

The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful feast where we come together to celebrate the great harvest that God is bringing forth – bringing many children to glory. We remember that God made the Israelites to dwell in tents just as He makes us to continue to dwell in these temporary bodies that someday will be shed for an immortal and incorruptible body (1 Corinthians 15:42-53). We also remember that God is working in us an eternal weight of glory, and He will be judging us all by Jesus Christ – giving life or death, reward or loss – based on how we lived our lives during this sojourn on earth. Let’s celebrate and rejoice in what a holy, just, and fair God we have. What an honor it is to have such a tremendous hope in Jesus Christ.

10 | The Eighth Day

In giving instructions regarding the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23, God declares it is a seven-day feast, but then twice tells us that there shall be a holy convocation on the eighth day. Leviticus 23:36 says, “On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.” Again in Leviticus 23:39 it says, “Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.”

Throughout the scriptures, the eighth day was a day of new beginnings. Children were to be circumcised on the eighth day (Leviticus 12:3), identifying them as one of God’s own children. Lepers were cleansed on the eighth day (Leviticus 14:10, 23). Priests would complete their consecration on the eighth day (Leviticus 9:1).

In like manner, the eighth day is a holy day, something very special and distinct, prophesying the new beginning. After Jesus makes an end to all rule and authority, when He cleans out the fields, gathering His saints into His kingdom and burning the chaff with unquenchable fire, He makes an end of death itself (Revelation 21:4). His rule and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords brings an end to all things that offend and bring about cursing in life. And what is left is a beautiful kingdom of peace.

The end of one age is the beginning of a new one. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 says, “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For ‘He [God the Father] has put all things under His [Jesus] feet.’ But when He says ‘all things are put under Him,’ it is evident that He [God the Father] who put all things under Him [Jesus] is excepted. Now when all things are

made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him [God the Father] who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

So what does this new world look like? Revelation 21:1-7 explains, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’ Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.’”

It has been God’s intention from the beginning to create children in His image, to bless them and give them dominion over His creation (Genesis 1:26-28).

Can you imagine this time, when there will be no more pain, sorrow, suffering, or death? Our whole lives are geared around the fact that there is lawlessness and injustice in this world. But at that time, there will be no more curse, no more pain as a result of disobedience to God. All will know Him and walk in His ways of love, which is defined as genuine care and concern for others, esteeming the interests of others better than our own.

The apostle John continues to describe this time of peace in Revelation 22:1-5, “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the

healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.”

When God created mankind, He gave him dominion and freedom to choose. Man chose to reject God’s command, taking from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The decision to reject the way of God, based on Satan’s temptation that we would be like God, is something that continues in the hearts and minds of mankind on this earth to this day.

However, Jesus is the remedy to overcome sin and death in our lives. Jesus was sent to die for us that if we would believe in Him, He would not only redeem us, but He would bring us into His kingdom, a place of peace apart from the cursing of this world. And the tree of life, which Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat after sinning, is something God offers to all the nations of those who are saved. God desires us to be blessed and made perfect and whole in Him (Revelation 22:14).

On the Eighth Day, we celebrate that God will bring a perfect ending to the work He has done in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus we see that He made all things, both seen and unseen. In Jesus we see that He provided for our redemption from sin. Jesus is our Passover. We also see how He saved us by Jesus’ life. He is the Resurrection and Life, raised up during the Days of

On the Eighth Day, we celebrate that God will bring a perfect ending to the work He has done in Jesus Christ.

Unleavened Bread. We see that it is through Jesus that the Holy Spirit was sent on Pentecost and that believers not only became part of the body of Christ, but they became Firstfruits to the Lord, and will serve as kings and priests in His kingdom. We see

that in the Feast of Trumpets we celebrate the return of our King, to gather His saints, and to pour out His judgment upon those who live against His perfect way of love. He will put an end to the rule and reign of mankind with its suffering and initiate His reign upon the earth. We see Him cleansing the earth of sin and the death it caused, and bringing about healing and life through His atoning work as our High Priest. And we see Him ruling and reigning until a time of judgment. He will gather the righteous into His kingdom, but He will cast all who oppose Him and His perfect ways into a lake of fire, where they will experience the second death. All who would choose Him and His life, liberty, love and righteousness will enter into God's kingdom with glorious new bodies. And all this work of Christ brings us to this last day, the Eighth Day, when we celebrate that Jesus will deliver His kingdom to God the Father. He will do this when He has put an end to all sin, cursing, pain, suffering and death and He has ushered in peace and eternal life into the lives of every child of God.

Conclusion

What a glorious God we serve, and what a wonderful plan He has laid out! His feasts are a celebration of each aspect of the gospel. Our Father in heaven is doing a tremendous work through His Son, Jesus Christ, and in each of these holidays we celebrate a unique aspect of the gospel. Most importantly we celebrate Jesus, who is preeminent in every feast, and in every aspect of the gospel, and whose work is still going on today in the lives of all who are coming to Him.

For believers, God's feasts are celebrations of things Jesus has accomplished, is accomplishing and will yet accomplish in the future. Without Him, there is no good news, there is no redemption, there is no hope of eternal life. God desires godly offspring, and these feasts celebrate how God has determined to bring many sons and daughters to glory through Jesus. We celebrate that He is not only bringing salvation, peace, life and joy to us personally, but also to the whole earth.

The question is, Are you allowing Jesus to do this work in your life today? Do you believe in Him, and what He has done in paying the price for your sins and applying His righteousness to you? Do you believe and trust in the work He does as our High Priest and Advocate to keep you free from sin each day? Do you believe He will complete this work in you?

If you have never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, this may be the time when God is calling you to see His Son, Jesus, and believe in Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). He is humble and gentle, faithful and true. There is no other name by which we may be saved (Acts 4:12). There is no other through whom God does this tremendous work to bless us, restore us, and give us life everlasting. You have been created and called to live life with God for all eternity.

Will you accept the salvation God offers, and believe on the name of Jesus Christ? “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the death, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Will you accept that you need the complete forgiveness and cleansing only His sacrifice can provide? If so, the Bible says you should believe, repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus, that you may be forgiven of your sins and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). If you haven't already done this, I encourage you to live out your faith in Jesus by following this instruction. Seek out good and faithful men who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus to baptize you, and help teach you in the way of the saints and disciples (Revelation 14:12; Matthew 28:18-20).

It is my great desire that you would know these things, and that you would believe them, so the blessings of God would be upon you. Let us remember to celebrate God's feasts, and give Him glory, honor and praise for the great things He has done, and is still doing, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior!

DISCOVERING JESUS IN GOD'S FEAST DAYS

Sabbath	Jesus the Creator, through whom God the Father made all things visible and invisible
Passover	Jesus the Redeemer, whom God the Father sent to save the world
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life, who was sent by the Father to lead us to Him
Firstfruits	Jesus the Resurrection and Life, to whom God the Father gave power to lay down His life and take it up again
Pentecost	Jesus the Hope of Glory, who sends the Holy Spirit to live in us and resurrect us to His holy, eternal life
Feast of Trumpets	Jesus King of Kings and Lord of Lords, to whom God the Father has given all authority and power
Day of Atonement	Jesus our High Priest and Mediator, whom God the Father raised up on our behalf
Feast of Tabernacles	Jesus the Righteous Judge, to whom the Father committed all judgment
Eighth Day	Jesus, who delivers the Kingdom to the Father, that God be all in all
