

Adult Bible Class

The Book of Leviticus - Lesson #12

The Seven Feasts of Jehovah

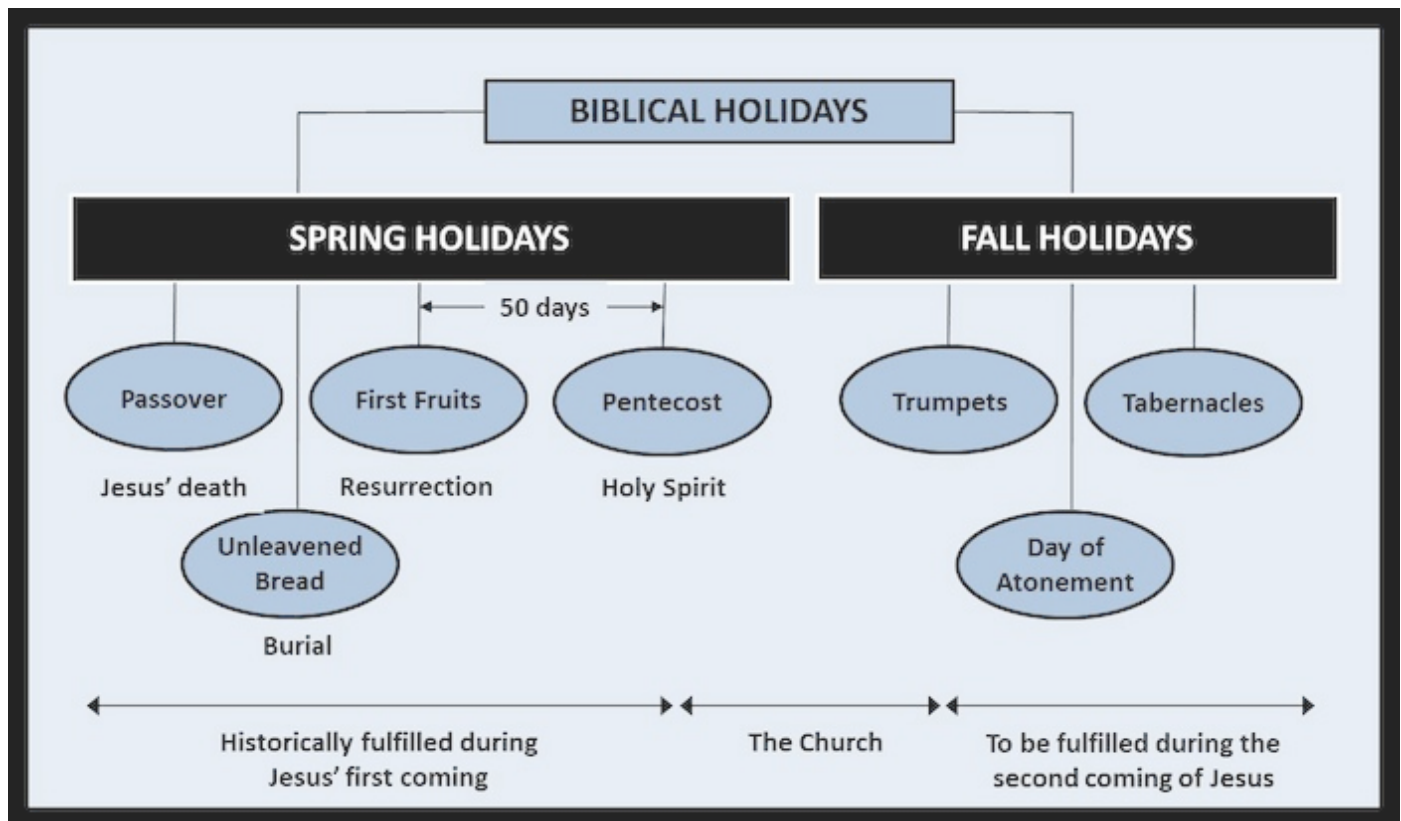
Leviticus 23:1 (NLT) The Lord said to Moses, ²“Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. These are the Lord’s appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as official days for holy assembly.

³“You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of complete rest, an official day for holy assembly. It is the Lord’s Sabbath day, and it must be observed wherever you live.

The Sabbath was not one of the seven feasts, but since it was a day set apart each week to the Lord, a reminder is given here to the Israelites to honor the Lord on this day by doing no work. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week (Saturday) and reflected the fact that God rested on the seventh day after six days of creation.

The Spring Festivals

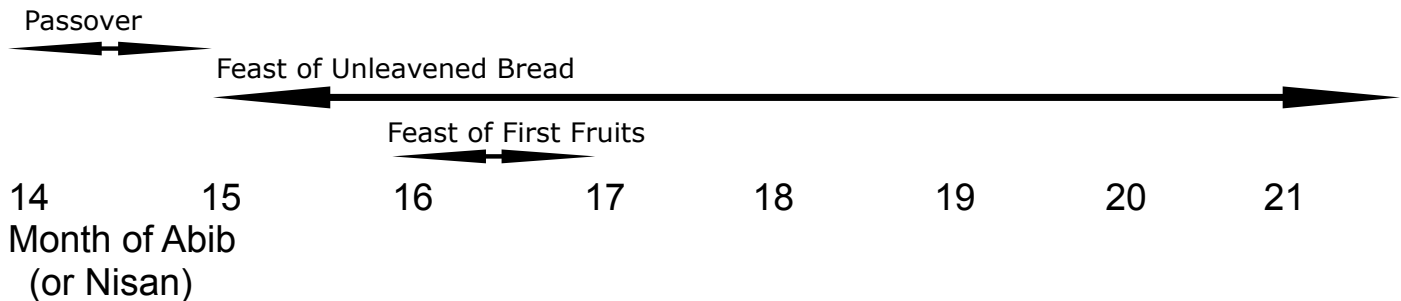
Leviticus 23:4 “In addition to the Sabbath, these are the Lord’s appointed festivals, the official days for holy assembly that are to be celebrated at their proper times each year.



Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread

⁵ "The Lord's Passover begins at sundown on the fourteenth day of the first month. ⁶ On the next day, the fifteenth day of the month, you must begin celebrating the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This festival to the Lord continues for seven days, and during that time the bread you eat must be made without yeast. ⁷ On the first day of the festival, all the people must stop their ordinary work and observe an official day for holy assembly. ⁸ For seven days you must present special gifts to the Lord. On the seventh day the people must again stop all their ordinary work to observe an official day for holy assembly."

The festivals or Feasts of Jehovah begin with three of them together - Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits.



The Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Abib (later called Nisan) which falls in March or April. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the very next day and continued for seven days.

The First Passover

On the first Passover, the children of Israel were residents of Egypt, slaves of Pharaoh. God had brought nine plagues on the Egyptians, which gave motivation to Pharaoh to let His people go. Before the tenth plague, God commanded each Israelite family to kill a lamb and put its blood on the doorpost of the house. This would be a sign to the death angel who was passing over Egypt in order to kill the firstborn of each household. The Lord said, *"When I see the blood, I will pass over you."*

Exodus 12:1 (NKJV) Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, ² "This month...*shall be* the first month of the year to you. ³ ...⁴ On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb...a lamb for a household... ⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year...⁶ Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. ⁷ And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. ⁸ Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it... ¹¹ ...*with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.*

¹² "For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. ¹³ Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you . . .

On the Passover, the children of Israel were saved from death by the blood of the lamb. The next day, the children of Israel were saved from slavery by leaving Egypt under the direction of Moses. They were saved from death and sin (slavery). God was bringing them to a new life.

Jesus, Our Passover

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 (NKJV) 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. ⁸ 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.

Paul clearly states that Christ is our Passover. His body was sacrificed for us, and His blood was shed for us to take away our sins. He was the substitution, taking our place in death for our sins.

For New Testament Christians, the blood of Jesus, our Passover, is the only way any man can approach God and avoid the ultimate penalty of sin - death and eternal separation from God.

Hebrews 9:22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

John 1:29 says, “...*Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!*” Jesus was the substitute - taking the place of every man - paying for each man’s sins by His death on the cross. But is every man saved? The key to the salvation of the Israelites was obedience to God’s plan to save them from death (putting the blood on the doorposts of the house). The lamb had done its part by dying. Now the Hebrew slaves had to do their part by applying the blood of the lamb. God said, “*When I see the blood I will pass over you.*”

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Spring festivals took place in quick succession. The day after the Passover, the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread began:

Exodus 12:14 (NKJV) ‘So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations... ¹⁵ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel...¹⁷ So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. ¹⁸ In the first *month,* on the fourteenth day of the month [Passover] at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses...²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.”

1 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV) 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.

Jesus, our Passover Lamb has been killed for us; His blood has been shed for our sins and now there must begin a diligent search for the leaven of sin in our lives. The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted for seven days, a perfect or complete

period of time. The search for sin - and repentance over sin - is a holy activity that will occupy us for the rest of our lives. True repentance involves not only a change of heart, but a change in direction as well. In the words of the psalmist, *“Depart from evil and do good”* (Psalm 34:14). Man is never too sinful that he cannot turn toward God who responds to repentance. *“Return to me, says the Lord of Hosts, and I will return to you”* (Zech. 1:3). *“Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that He may have mercy on him”* (Isaiah 55:6-7).

Jesus died, and we as Christians “die” through repentance. Then, we are “buried with Him” in baptism:

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

The theme of “believe (or repent) and be baptized” is one that occurs over and over in the book of Acts, which is the history and example of the early church (Acts 2:38, 2:41, 8:12, 8:13, 8:36-38, 9:18, 10:44-48, 16:14-15, 16:31-33, 18:8, 19:1-5). These two spiritual events are coupled together - and are pictured in the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Together the whole eight day celebration was called “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” or “The Passover”. This can cause some confusion when reading the New Testament Scripture.

Matthew 26:17 Now on the first *day of the Feast* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?”

Luke 22:1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.

Luke 22:7 Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.

The Feast of First Fruits

Closely connected with the Passover, and even while the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread was taking place, the Feast of First Fruits took place (this feast would be celebrated when the Israelites took possession of the land of Canaan and began raising crops). The Passover was always observed on the 14th day of the month, immediately followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasted seven days (from the 15th to the 21st). Within this eight day period of time, there was always a Sabbath, and the sheaf of first fruits (sheaf of barley) was to be waved before the Lord on the day after the Sabbath.

Celebration of First Harvest [Firstfruits]

Leviticus 23:9 Then the Lord said to Moses, ¹⁰ “Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. When you enter the land I am giving you and you harvest its first crops, bring the priest a bundle of grain from the first cutting of your grain harvest. ¹¹ On the day after the Sabbath, the priest

will lift it up before the Lord so it may be accepted on your behalf. ¹² On that same day you must sacrifice a one-year-old male lamb with no defects as a burnt offering to the Lord. ¹³ With it you must present a grain offering consisting of four quarts of choice flour moistened with olive oil. It will be a special gift, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. You must also offer one quart of wine as a liquid offering. ¹⁴ Do not eat any bread or roasted grain or fresh kernels on that day until you bring this offering to your God. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed from generation to generation wherever you live.

The resurrection of Jesus is pictured in the Feast of First Fruits.

1 Corinthians 15:17 (NKJV) ...if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! ¹⁸ Then also those who have fallen asleep [died] in Christ have perished. ¹⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶ The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death.

Just as Jesus is our Passover - He died and was buried for us - Jesus is also our first fruits. He is the first man to rise from the dead bodily. Jesus was crucified on the Passover. He laid in the grave on the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which was a Sabbath day). Then, on the third day, He rose from the grave - on the Day of First Fruits.

Though a few others had been raised from the dead in both the Old and New Testaments, Jesus rose from the dead *with a glorified body*, never to die again. Those others who were raised from the dead were raised in their mortal bodies and each one of them died again, and their bodies lay in the grave, waiting for the trumpet sound at the rapture. Jesus, however, was the only one to have truly conquered death *permanently*. Jesus never died again, and His resurrected body was immortal.

Comparing Three Feasts of Jehovah to the Crucifixion and Resurrection

It is interesting to study how the first three Feasts of Jehovah correspond with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The chronology of these days can be followed. But first, we must note that the Jewish way of determining a day was different.

Genesis 1:5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

Leviticus 23:32 . . . from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.

The Jewish day begins at sunset and ends at sunset, or at about 6:00 p.m. (as opposed to our way of beginning a new day at midnight). It is important that we understand this as we study the days of the crucifixion and resurrection.

Old Testament Feasts

<u>Passover</u>	<u>Feast of Unleavened Bread</u>	<u>Feast of First Fruits</u>
14th Nisan	15th Nisan	16th Nisan
Jesus died	Jesus was buried	Jesus rose again
Friday	Saturday (Sabbath)	Sunday

Beginning on the 14th of Nisan, or Friday, (which began at sunset on our Thursday) these events happened (think about this as a 24 hour period):

- The disciples prepared the Passover meal of unleavened bread and wine.
- Judas was identified as the betrayer.
- The Lord's Supper was instituted for the New Covenant.
- Jesus goes to Gethsemane and is arrested, betrayed by Judas.
- The trials took place.
- Crucifixion began at about 9:00 a.m. (the third hour of the day, Mark 15:25).
- Jesus died at about 3:00 p.m. (the ninth hour of the day, Matthew 27:45-50).
- Jesus was laid in the tomb before sunset (it was Preparation Day. The next day was not only a Sabbath, but it was a High Sabbath because it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread).

On the 15th day of Nisan, or Saturday (which began on our Friday evening):

- Jesus lay in the tomb on the Sabbath. It is interesting to note that even Jesus observed the Sabbath that day. He rested in the tomb, his work being done.

On the 16th day of Nisan, or Sunday

- Jesus rose again in the early part of Sunday.

Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks)

The Festival of Harvest [Pentecost]

Leviticus 23:15 "From the day after the Sabbath [the Feast of First Fruits] —the day you bring the bundle of grain to be lifted up as a special offering—count off seven full weeks. ¹⁶ Keep counting until the day after the seventh Sabbath, fifty days later. Then present an offering of new grain to the Lord. ¹⁷ From wherever you live, bring two loaves of bread to be lifted up before the Lord as a special offering. Make these loaves from four quarts of choice flour, and bake them with yeast. They will be an offering to the Lord from the first of your crops.

¹⁸ Along with the bread, present seven one-year-old male lambs with no defects, one young bull, and two rams as burnt offerings to the Lord. These burnt offerings, together with the grain offerings and liquid offerings, will be a special gift, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. ¹⁹ Then you must offer one male goat as a sin offering and two one-year-old male lambs as a peace offering.

²⁰ "The priest will lift up the two lambs as a special offering to the Lord, together with the loaves representing the first of your crops. These offerings, which are holy to the Lord, belong to the priests.

²¹ That same day will be proclaimed an official day for holy assembly, a day on which you do no ordinary work. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed from generation to generation wherever you live.

The Feast of Weeks (or "Pentecost") is celebrated fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits (Pentecost means "fifty" in Greek). For the Israelite, the Feast of Weeks was a time to present an offering of new grain of the summer wheat harvest to the Lord.

On the Feast of Weeks, the priest would wave two loaves of leavened bread (bread with yeast). These two loaves represent the Jews and the Gentiles, the two groups that make up the Church. Yeast indicates sin, and these two groups are sinful, but they have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus through New Testament salvation.

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem following His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Scripture says 120 believers, including the eleven remaining disciples and Mary, Jesus' mother, were all together in the upper room, waiting for the promise. The Holy Spirit filled the house:

Acts 2:1 (NKJV) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Scripture tells us that devout Jews from all over the Mediterranean world were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks, and they heard the 120 newly filled believers speaking in many languages that they understood. Then Peter got up and preached a message - the first sermon of the Christian church.

Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them...

¹⁷ "...it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy...

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth...³² ...God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear... ³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

For the Christian, Pentecost means *new life* through the Spirit of Christ. We are new creatures in Christ through His Spirit. We are *born again through the Spirit of God*.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace . . .

¹³ 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, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 2:1 And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins

All four spring feasts together are a picture of Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and the outpouring of His Spirit. New Testament salvation begins with recognizing Jesus' death in our place. Then the believer repents, is baptized in water in Jesus' name, and is filled with the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament feasts were a shadow of the good things to come in New Testament days through Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:16-17 (NKJV) So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Where Are We Now?

Right now, we are in the Church Age (at the end of the Church Age, to be exact). It is summertime, and the church is busy about the Father's business of winning souls. The church is planting the seed, watering the crops, helping the plants to flourish. We are preparing men and women for the fall feasts - when

Jesus raptures His church, returns to this earth, and sets up his earthly kingdom during the Millennium.

There was a long period of four full months between the first four feasts and the last three. This was a very busy time for the Israelites. It was the time of wheat harvest and the harvest of grapes as well as other crops. As Christians, we are involved in preparing the harvest of men's souls. At

the end of the Church Age, the angels will complete the harvest (read Matthew 13:24-43, emphasis on verses 39-42).

