



Christ In The Feasts

Summary: Christ fulfills the Old Testament feasts and gives us reason to celebrate Him today.

Good morning church! My name is Matthew Pottenger and I have the privilege of serving as one of the pastors on staff here. Pastor Jeff took some time this week to celebrate 23 years and I have the privilege of filling in today.

Today we are going to examine 4 of the 7 Feasts of the Lord that He commanded Moses and the children of Israel to observe. These feasts come up several times with varying degrees of detail throughout the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. The first time, as those going through the Exodus study will soon find out is in Exodus 23. But for us today we're going to look at the passage that explores these feasts in Leviticus 23.

But, before we jump into this passage, you may be wondering, "Why are we studying these Old Testament feasts?" Well, I'm glad you asked! I want to give you three reasons why I think this merits our time and attention this morning.

1. First and foremost, my prayer is that you will love Jesus more, and by seeing Him in the O.T. as the fulfillment of these feasts, that you'll learn to better look for Him in your own studies.
2. Secondly, my hope is that through studying these O.T. passages you would also learn to love the O.T. more, seeing just how accessible and relevant it can be for us today!
3. Thirdly, that you would see the benefit of having a personal commitment of setting aside "feast times" unto the Lord in your annual life rhythm.

Now that you know my heart and motivation for our study, let's dig into God's Word together.

READ: Leviticus 23:1-3 – "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts. ³ 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."

Before we dive into any of the specific feasts, we see in verse 2 that God states in no uncertain terms that **these feasts are HIS**. They belong to Him! This is critical to understanding the purpose of these feasts. God didn't just give His people an arbitrary holiday to enjoy themselves. God was planning a celebration and He invited His people to come and join Him in the festivities.

We see this same theme all throughout Scripture. **God is the initiator**. He is the one who calls us to what He is doing. Our choice in the matter is to come to Him and join Him, or to ignore Him and do our own thing.

The second thing we see is that God calls these "Holy Convocations" or your translation might say "Sacred Assemblies". We don't use the term "convocation" regularly in our vocabulary, but it means to call an assembly together, but as you'll see by the first word, this was not a political or societal or some other demographically formed gathering of people, it was HOLY. Or we could say that the purpose of these gatherings were **for God's spiritual purpose**, a purpose that would help further set us apart from the commonplace things of the world and to His holy and sacred purpose for our life in Him.

I also find it fascinating that before diving into the 7 feasts of the Lord, God mentions the first holy convocation is that of the weekly sabbath. In drawing attention to this it serves as an example. The Sabbath will resurface often as a pattern of how the people were to observe these feasts. Or, in other words, the theme that undergirds all the feasts is that they must be done in a way that stops us in our daily life rhythm and causes us to **pause, gather and reflect** on something specific about the Lord.

In this way, these feasts were to be a rest and break from normal daily responsibilities but not a vacation per se. Rather, something more like what we would call a "**retreat**". A time we associate with pulling away to examine the Lord, ourselves, and gain insight and direction for our life as we continue to pursue Him after the feast is over.

Now I've mentioned that there are 7 feasts of the Lord, and before we dig into the first four, let me do a quick overview. There were 3 feasts that happened in the Spring time and all within a week's timeframe. These were The Passover, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, and finally, the Feast of Firstfruits. Then, 7 weeks from the Feast of Firstfruits was the Feast of Weeks, sometimes called the feast of the first great harvest. Then in the Fall, there were 3 more feasts. The first was the Feast of Trumpets followed by the Day of Atonement 10 days later, and then

caping off the celebrations was the Feast of Tabernacles 5 days after the Day of Atonement.

Now, I already mentioned that these feasts all point to Jesus, but one of the unique features of these feasts is that the Spring feasts all point to aspects of Christ's first coming, whereas the Fall feasts all point to aspects of Christ's second coming. Today we're only going to be looking at the first four. Those pointing us to Christ's first coming.

The 3 Spring Feasts:

Passover & Unleavened Bread

READ: Leviticus 23:4-8 – “*These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. ⁵ On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD’S Passover. ⁶ And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. ⁷ On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.’ ”*

The **Passover** starts at sundown on the 14th day of the first month. This feast commemorates the deliverance of Israel from Egypt when the Lord, in His judgment, passed over the houses of Israel when He saw the blood of the lamb that was on the doorpost of the house. This was one of 3 annual feasts that God commanded all able bodied Israeli men to observe by making the trip to Jerusalem to worship.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread kicks off the day after Passover and is held for the entirety of the week that follows. Like the Passover, it commemorates Israel's hasty departure and the lack of time they had to let their bread rise or ferment. But more significantly, it points to God's holiness and that the Sin of His people must be removed. One of the customs that would form around observing this feast was the “driving out of the leaven”. The Jewish family would remove all the leaven from the house but leave one small portion that the father was to find and then he was to sweep it away, driving it from the house, thus giving the house his certification of being totally free and clean from any leaven.

As the people would pause life and gather together to celebrate both the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened bread, it gave them time to reflect on God's power

and deliverance, as well as the need to “drive out the leaven” or sin of their own lives. You might say that this was almost like a “spring cleaning” of the soul.

It’s not hard to find Jesus in these feasts. The New Testament gives clear reference to Jesus as our Passover lamb and we also see Jesus’ sinless perfection as a picture that He was the unleavened bread of life.

READ: 1 Corinthians 5:6b-7 says, “[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.](#)”

Through Paul, we are reminded that Christ is the Lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the world. He is our Passover lamb. Some of the unique features about the Passover lamb from the Exodus account is that it was to be pure, without blemish. It was to be chosen by the family and brought into the house. There is a fascinating progression in Exodus 12 where it talks about how we are to take “a lamb” into our house, and “the lamb” that was to live with us for 4 days eventually becomes “your lamb.” The lamb that you would offer for the Passover.

God wants our salvation to be personal. He wants us to take ownership of Jesus as “my lamb” and not just a way of salvation, but THE way and the way that I have personally taken to be reconciled with God. It’s not good enough to just ‘know’ the details... you must participate in them.

Another feature of this feast was its connection with Unleavened Bread. Paul in 1 Corinthians 5 points out that leaven is biblically used as a symbol of sin. We read of Jesus in Hebrews 4 that “[we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.](#)” Jesus was our sinless and perfect sacrifice. He was tested in every way but proven to be sinless. Jesus thus exemplifies the fullness of this feast in His sinless perfection.

However, as we consider Paul’s exhortation, we too are called to follow in Christ’s footsteps to drive out the leaven. Like the feast demonstrates, we need to search for the leaven diligently and go to whatever length necessary to purge it from our household. In this we are reminded that Christ pays for our sin as our Passover lamb so that we can be made free from sin. But we get to participate in the process of purging the sin from our lives by putting to death the old person and choosing to live in the newness of Christ.

One last fascinating tradition that Jews began to adopt as a part of their Passover celebration is the tradition of the Afikomen. This tradition is nowhere referenced in the Scripture, and is hard to trace as to when it began to be practiced among the Jews. Perhaps it was something that came through the early church which was still largely Jewish and was adopted, even unknowingly, by Jews who did not see or recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

The story of the Afikomen has to do with the three pieces of Matzah bread at the Passover meal. Traditionally, the father would take the middle piece and break it in half, wrapping one part of it in a linen cloth and then hiding it somewhere in the house. At a later time in the meal, the children would go looking for the Afikomen and whoever found it would bring it to the father and give it to Him at which time the father would give that child a gift.

We can clearly see that Jesus is the Afikomen. He, like the Matzah, was unleavened (sinless), pierced and stripped (as Isaiah refers to the Messiah). He was broken and wrapped in linen and hidden or buried. His disciples then went to search for Him. And when we have found and confessed Jesus to be our Passover Lamb, and we bring Him, as our sacrifice, to the Father. The Father then gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit as a promise of our acceptance by Him.

Paul, in Romans 11:25 says that “blindness in part has been given to Israel.” And so we can see how even though their traditions clearly point to the work of Jesus, they still often are blind to His reality. There are SO MANY more beautiful nuances of how Jesus fulfills various aspects of these feasts but for now we’re going to continue our exploration of the next two feasts.

The Feast of Firstfruits

READ: Leviticus 23:9-14 “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ “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. ¹¹ 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. ¹² 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. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ 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.* ”

The Feast of Firstfruits moves us from the time of deliverance to the time when Israel would be settled in their own land, growing crops and living in the land of “milk and honey”. A way that they would honor God in His gracious provision for them was to take the first portion of their crops yield and bring it as a sacrifice to God. This was celebrated on the first day of the week after the Sabbath during the feast of Unleavened bread, which would be a Sunday.

As we consider how this feast points us to Jesus, there is another passage from 1 Corinthians that connects Christ to these firstfruits.

READ: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 “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.”

Christ, and specifically that of His resurrection is referred to as a picture of these firstfruits. In fact, the redemption of God’s people is often paralleled in the Scriptures with the image of God’s harvest. By Christ becoming a man, dying on the cross, and raising again in glorious triumph over death. He has become the firstfruits of the harvest. The first one to do what we could not do, and thus a pattern for us to follow and a promise of what we have to look forward to.

And, if you recall, the feast of Firstfruits was celebrated on Sunday, just as Christ rose from the dead on Sunday. He literally was “the firstfruits” on the day of the feast of firstfruits! How cool is that! But that’s not all. There is also a fascinating passage in Leviticus 2 about the sacrifice of the firstfruits. Let’s read what it says.

READ: Leviticus 2:14-16 “If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads. ¹⁵ And you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it. *It is a grain offering.* ¹⁶ Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: *part* of its beaten grain and *part* of its oil, with all the frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the LORD.”

This sacrifice points to Christ in several ways. First it says that the offering of firstfruits was to be of ‘green heads of grain’ meaning that this grain was cut off before it was fully ripe. In the same way Jesus was “cut off” when He was still a young man, approximately 33 years old.

The second thing is that this is the only place that details that an offering was to be beaten in addition to being roasted on the fire. This has clear ties to how Christ was beaten and suffered much prior to His crucifixion. Lastly, we see the combination of oil and frankincense with this sacrifice as reminders of how Christ’s life was full of the Holy Spirit and prayer, and not only that, but His sacrifice provided a way for us to gain the Holy Spirit and have our prayers heard by the Father because of what He did.

One final point of interest from the passage we read in Leviticus 23. Recall how verse 14 said, “*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.*” Another way we could read this passage is that we are not allowed to “partake” of the grain of the harvest until we have first brought our sacrifice to God. In other words, by bringing Jesus, God’s provision for us and His perfect sacrifice to Him, we are thus given permission to partake of the grain of the harvest thereafter. In this we are given the promise of our own resurrection, but even more than that we see that we have access to the Bread of Life for our daily sustenance. Jesus, both our sacrifice and the firstfruits, is our point of access to be participants of the harvest of God.

Now, let’s turn our attention to the next feast, the Feast of Weeks.

The Feast of Weeks

READ: Leviticus 23:15-17 “*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. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. ¹⁷ 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.*”

The fourth feast that God gave His people was called the **Feast of Weeks** and it took place 7 weeks after the Feast of Firstfruits. This feast was associated with the first great harvest or the culmination of the grain harvests (Barley and Wheat both

being finished for the year by this time). This was a time to celebrate God's provision realized and to give Him thanks.

Besides the Passover, this is probably the one feast most people know about today or have heard of, though perhaps not by the Hebrew name but by the Greek name given to it. In Greek this feast was called Pentecost which derives its meaning from being the 50th day from the Feast of Firstfruits. And we know that Pentecost was also the time in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit fell upon the first disciples and the church was born.

Now, I hope you took notice of a strange command in verse 17. It said, “**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.**” If leaven is usually associated with sin, and God expressly forbids the offering of leaven in His sacrifices elsewhere, how are we to understand this? One point of clarification is that these were wave offerings and not offerings that were to be burnt, and God's commandment about not offering leaven was only in regards to not having a leavened offering burnt in the fire.

But another fascinating aspect of this offering is that there were two leavened loafs of bread. We can conjecture from this a depiction of God's heart to accept Jew and Gentile... both are sinners (i.e. leavened) and neither would pass through the fire of judgment because the lamb was offered instead. And so, though we know that our sin is what makes us deserving of judgment, we are ceremonially brought and offered to God while the fire of judgment is reserved for the perfect and unblemished sacrifice of the lamb.

In the same way that this feast was to celebrate the first great harvest, it was likewise the event where the first great harvest of souls was added to the church when Peter preached and about 3000 people were saved. Thus the church could be seen as one of these leavened loaves.

Likewise, the Jews hold a tradition that their nation was “birthed” at Mt. Sinai when God gave them the 10 Commandments and that this happened at the time of the Feast of Weeks. And so we could also see that one of the leavened loaves could represent the Jewish nation.

As we see this feast fulfilled in the New Testament at the feast of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church, there is one more point of application for us to consider, namely that we are called to live in the power of the Spirit.

The Feast of Weeks was a celebration of God's provision through the harvest. In the same way, God has provided us the power of the Spirit to go out into His harvest and to labor for the souls of others. But this work is not something we should attempt to do in our own strength. We need to live in a place of relying on the Power of God's Spirit to accomplish the work He calls us to. If the work seems easy, we probably are not properly seeing it. If the work seems to hard, then we know that He is the one who will do it in and through us. [“He who calls you is faithful who also will do it.”](#) (1 Thess 5:24)

As we consider these feasts, their various features and how they point us to Christ, there is one more aspect that is beneficial for us to consider how we might apply them to our lives today.

The nature of these feasts might parallel some aspects of how we take a vacation today. For many in Israel it was a time for the family (extended family and all) to travel to Jerusalem together (think of the story when Jesus was 12 years old and got accidentally left behind).

- A break from work and our normal routine of life
- Time with family in a context very different than our daily living
- Traveling to a “destination” that had an aspect of wonder, full of crowds, and dangers and thrills to be navigated
- It was characterized as a “time of rest” it was intended to ultimately be restful

But one feature of these celebrations that may not be so common in our modern day vacation is that of **greater intentionality in our pursuit of God**. These feasts gave the people a spiritual purpose to celebrate. Their actions were intended to give them time to reflect on God's work in the past over an extended period of time. It was also supposed to provoke them to long for their fulfillment in the future promise of the Messiah and His fulfillment of these things.

Often these feasts would give them time to contemplate their life, their relationship with God, to consider their sacrifice and what they were offering to the Lord and how these were to bring them closer to Him.

My challenge to you today is to consider the benefits of taking these aspects of how they celebrated the Feasts of the Lord and apply them to your own life in a similar way. Seek to make time to get away where you specifically have time to invest in your relationship with God. Time where you can pause from your daily & weekly activities and rest, reflecting on what He has done for you.

Consider His promises to you in His Word and how those promises shape the course of your future. Chief in my mind of all God's promises is that promise to make me more like Jesus. We read about this Romans 8:29. As Christians our final destiny is to resemble and look like Jesus Christ.

As you think of the Passover, consider the great sacrifice of Christ and how your life has been preserved from judgment because He laid down His life in your place.

As you think of The Feast of Unleavened Bread, thank God for His perfect righteousness that He gives to you, that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. But also consider if there are areas of your life that need to be put to death, where the flesh needs to be purged of sin. Is there sin that is fermenting and needs to be driven out and eradicated from your life?

As you think of the Firstfruits, consider how Christ has gone before us in the resurrection. That we will be made like Him for we will see Him as He is. And as the psalmist sweetly reminds us, "I will be satisfied when I awake in your likeness" (Ps 17:15). This is His promise to us, but are you walking in the joy of that promise? Are you making the progress of "Christlikeness" your daily aim?

Finally, as you think of the Feast of Weeks, remember that He has called us to enter His harvest. He calls us to pray for more workers; And He gives us His Spirit to empower us for the work He calls us to. Is there an aspect of thanksgiving that you can lift up before the Lord? Is there a work He is calling you to? Are you seeking to work in your strength or the strength He provides through His Spirit?

The feasts provide an opportunity to pause life, to gather together, and to reflect on Jesus and what He has done. Take time this year to practice this rhythm of pulling away and seeking the Lord about these things. Make it a part of your annual planning. And be amazed at how the Lord continues to reveal Himself while refreshing your soul. Let's Pray.



Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Leviticus 23:1-21 Christ In The Feasts

Summary: Christ fulfills the Old Testament feasts and gives us reason to celebrate Him today.

- Before today's sermon, what was your opinion of Leviticus (and other books like it)? Has your opinion changed at all after seeing some of the treasures to be mined from its pages?
- Pick one of the 4 feasts from Leviticus 23:1-21 and reread it. (Other passages that detail information about the feasts can be found in Exodus 23, Numbers 28 & Deuteronomy 16)
 - What stood out to about the feast?
 - What questions do you have about it?
 - Can you find anything significant to point you to Christ and His fulfillment of this feast?
 - What do you see by way of application for you as a Christian?
- What are some ways that you have (or would like to) pull away and take time to reflect on the Lord, be refreshed, and spend extended time with Him? (Take time to share with someone or journal what this would ideally look like for you.)
- How might you answer the above question if it involves you and your family and not just you by yourself?
- In the challenge at the end of the sermon there were aspects to reflect on about God and aspects to be challenged in our own walk. Which one might God be getting your attention about?
 - Passover** – Christ's great sacrifice – My time in reflection/celebration of this
 - The Feast of Unleavened Bread** - His perfect righteousness – What areas of my life need to be put to death (purged of sin)
 - Firstfruits** - Christ's resurrection – How is my progress of growing in Christlikeness
 - Feast of Weeks** - His Spirit to empower us – Am I working in my strength or the strength of His Spirit