

*THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO*  
*MOSES*

*THE FEAST DAYS OF LEVITICUS 23*

*LENNY CACCHIO*

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*The Gospel According to Moses:  
The Feast Days of Leviticus 23*  
by Lenny Cacchio

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## INTRODUCTION



Early in our Christian walk, many of us set out to read the Bible in order from Genesis to Revelation. We were able to follow the story flow through Genesis and most of Exodus easily enough. But when we came to the book of Leviticus we probably found ourselves getting bogged down in the almost agonizing detail of the rituals and sacrifices.

God had his reasons for giving his instructions in such intimate detail. The purpose of this series of studies is to look at a special set of festivals described in this most arcane of books. These special times of the year are called The Feasts of the Lord, and understanding their meaning can deepen our understanding of God's purpose in our lives.

While Leviticus might seem like a book of deep mysteries, it in fact was written for a people whose knowledge of God was elementary at best. The nation of Israel had escaped the slavery of Egypt just a few months before. They often confused worship of the true God with the pagan worship they had been exposed to in Egypt, going so far as to make themselves a golden calf and claiming that worship of this calf was in fact worship of God (Exodus 32).

Leviticus, a book written to little ones in the faith, in theory should be a logical place to start a study of the Bible and God's plan for our lives. That might be hard to fathom, given how the book comes across in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But a study of the Feasts of the Lord will show just how instructional this book is.

In this study we will explore both the Old and New Testaments. It is my belief that the Old Testament cannot be properly understood apart from the New Testament, and that the New Testament, large portions of which are simply quotations from the Old, cannot be properly separated from its historical context of the Hebrew Scriptures.

## **The Hebrew Calendar**

The secular calendar in use today is not the same calendar that was used in ancient times, and certainly not the same one in use in the days of Moses. Anciently, the year began in the spring, and months were counted by the time between new moons. On occasion (because there is not a whole number of days between new moons and there is not a whole number of new moons in a year) extra days and sometimes even extra months were added in order to make sure that the calendar months did not creep out of their respective seasons of the year.

Ancient Israel was primarily an agricultural society, and it was important to keep the calendar in sync with the growing seasons. The first month of the year was in the spring, usually overlapping what we would reckon as March-April. This was a time of new beginnings, and as we will see, there is significant meaning in that time of year for both Christians and Jews.

The Jewish people today still use this ancient calendar to determine the dates of the various festivals. While the dates may be the same each year on the Hebrew calendar, they do migrate around our modern Gregorian calendar.

And although such High Holy Days as Passover and Rosh Hashanah fall on different days each year (by Gregorian reckoning), they generally fall within a narrow band of a few weeks either way on our calendar.

There is some discussion among people who have studied the calendar regarding whether the Hebrew calendar in use today is the same in all aspects as the one used in Moses' day. Much of the discussion revolves around the intercalary (leap year) rules, those times when extra days would have been added to certain months and which years would receive an extra month.

The reality is, no one really knows for sure exactly how that calendar looked, but no one disputes that it was similar to what the rabbis have today. So we'll leave that discussion to those who are interested in such things. The meaning of these days and how they relate to our walk with Christ are valid regardless how the calendar argument ends, which I suspect will be shortly after Christ returns at the earliest.

### **The "Three Act Play"**

It is becoming more common in contemporary churches to have short one-act plays to teach object lessons to the congregation. The plays might revolve around an aspect of Christian living or perhaps are designed to teach some basic truths about salvation.

God gave to his people a sort of three three-act play that the people and the priesthood acted out. This play was supposed to commemorate the great events of their history and to be great times of celebration. And although they might not have realized it at the time, in acting out this play in the tabernacle and the homes of the people, they were pointing forward to the great events depicting the salvation of the human race.

But instead of taking place in one service at one time, this play was a series scheduled at predetermined times throughout the year. When taken as a whole they painted a picture of Christ and the work he was to do. While some of the work has been fulfilled already, there is much that is yet to take place.

While the play is still in progress, there is no reason that we, who are blessed to have the Word of God, should be ignorant of how the play ends. Exodus 23 describes the three acts of the play:

Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the *Feast of Harvest*, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the *Feast of Ingathering* at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. (Verses 14 – 16, New King James Version throughout unless otherwise indicated. Emphasis added)

In Leviticus 23, the three acts are divided into several “scenes”.

### **Act 1: Unleavened Bread (Passover Season)**

Time of Year: Spring. 14 – 21 days of the first month

Scene 1: Passover (v. 5)

Scene 2: Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 6 – 9)

Scene 3: Wave Sheaf Offering of the first fruits (v. 10 – 14)



## **Act 2: Feast of Harvest of Firstfruits**

Time of Year: Late spring/early summer in the third month of Hebrew calendar. (v. 14 – 22)

Also known as Feast of Weeks or Feast of Firstfruits. In the New Testament, this day is referred to as Pentecost (Acts 2:1)

## **Act 3: Feast of Ingathering**

Time of year: Autumn. The seventh month of the Hebrew calendar

Scene 1: Day of Trumpets. First day of the seventh month. Also known as Rosh Hashanah. (v. 24 – 25)

Scene 2: Day of Atonement. Tenth day of seventh month (v. 26 – 32). Also known as Yom Kippur or simply “the fast” (Acts 27:9).

Scene 3: Feast of Tabernacles (v. 34 – 44). Also known as the Feast of Booths. 15 – 21 days of the seventh month.

Scene 4: The Eighth Day. Also known as Simhat Torah (v39). 22nd day of the seventh month. Sometimes referred to as The Last Great Day.

\* \* \* \*

While there are other festivals related to Judaism, such as Chanukah, Purim, etc., these days are not among those given to Israel in the wilderness. They are more in the nature of national holidays, much like Independence Day or Thanksgiving in the United States. While these festivals

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commemorate great events in Jewish history and are not wrong to celebrate, they do not point to God's great plan and the salvation we have through his Son.

So let's proceed to Act 1: The Passover and Unleavened Bread

## CHAPTER ONE



# *Passover*

### **Passover: Act 1, Scene 1**

*On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover. 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. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 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.*

*Leviticus 23:5-8:*

The Festivals, or Feast Days, of the Bible can be understood on many levels. To the people of Israel, they recounted significant events in their national history. That is certainly true of the Passover, which recalls the night when the Angel of the Lord “passed over” the children of

Israel during their last evening as slaves to the Egyptians and slew the firstborn of all Egypt.

But these great celebrations of freedom are more than just historical commemorations. As a general rule, we can understand their meaning on several levels. Most of them have a distinct application in four areas:

1. Historical
2. Christological. They point to Christ.
3. Soteriological. They point to an aspect of the plan of salvation.
4. Prophetic. They point to future and end-time events.

Some people believe that the Festivals can be understood in terms of the different covenants of the Bible. Some believe that the Festivals can be understood in terms of different dispensations (ways God has related to mankind through the ages). Both ideas might very well be correct. There is a lot we don't know, and coming to understand the fullness of what God had in mind when he created these days can prove to be an exciting study.

Throughout this study do keep in mind these "Four Understandings of the Festivals". They will add greatly to the richness of understanding what God is doing for us through his son Jesus Christ.

## **The Lamb without Blemish**

If I were use the phrase "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us", what would you think I meant by that? Paul in fact used that term in I Corinthians 5:7. What did he mean?

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

And Peter referred to Jesus as “a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (I Peter 1:19)

These are all not so veiled references to the first of the Festivals of the Lord, known commonly as Passover.

God introduced the Passover to Israel in Exodus 12. Here we find the historical context of the Festival, but notice how it and its annual celebration pointed toward the true Lamb of God and his sacrifice. Look up the scripture references in your Bible and answer the questions.

### **Study Questions on Exodus 12:1-13**

1. What month did this take place (verse 2)? The first month of the Hebrew year, commonly known as Abib, occurs in March-April of the Gregorian calendar.
2. What day of the month did they bring the lamb into the home (verse 3)? As we'll see, another important event happened many years later on the tenth day of the first month.
3. Fill in the blank from verse 5: “Your lamb shall be without \_\_\_\_\_”.
4. They were to keep it until what day of the month (verse 6)? And then what did they do with the lamb?
5. What did they do with the blood of the lamb (verse 7)?
6. Why did they do that with the blood of the lamb (verse 13)?

## Summary

God introduced the Passover to the people of Israel on the night they were to obtain their freedom from slavery, and the people were to keep it as an annual memorial (verse 14). In that sense it was meant to be a national holiday in much the same way that the Fourth of July is a national holiday in the United States: it is a reminder that as a nation we did not always have our freedom, but we now celebrate the anniversary of the day and the sacrifices of those who went before us without whom we would not have that freedom.

But God did not intend Passover to be just a historical commemoration. The Passover pointed forward to another event, an event that was to occur on another Passover many years later. Notice these clear markers in Act 1, Scene 1 of the drama that God had Israel repeat every year:

1. The lamb without blemish (verse 5) looked forward to the true Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). Peter, in I Peter 1:19, borrows the phraseology from the passage in Exodus and calls Jesus “a lamb without blemish”.
2. The blood of the lamb delivered the people of Israel from death, just as the blood of Jesus Christ redeems us “from the empty way of life” (I Peter 1:18, NIV) and “takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 NKJV). (Note: “Redeem” literally means to buy back in the same way that a slave can be “redeemed” or “bought back” from slavery. Being a slave to an empty way of life, or sin, is an apt way to describe life without Christ).

3. By his blood we are also “justified” (Romans 5:9), or made right with God, for “according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Hebrews 9:22)

Clearly, the Passover lamb pointed forward to the true “lamb without blemish”, Christ our Passover who was sacrificed for us.

But there is more, right down to the very timing of the fulfillment of this day.

### Study Comments and Questions

Turn to John 12. These events took place within a week of the crucifixion. Chapter 12 opens with a specific date attached to it. Notice the phrase “six days before the Passover.”

☞ The term “Passover” is used in several different ways in scripture, depending on the context. “Passover” can refer to the lamb that was sacrificed, as in I Corinthians 5:7. It can also refer to the Passover meal that took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib consisting of the lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread and wine. As we shall see shortly, Luke’s gospel sometimes employs this usage. In other places, such as John’s gospel and in Luke 22:1, Passover refers to the entire seven day festival beginning on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib and ending on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Abib. The latter is the common usage among Jews today.

1. Six days before the Passover, by John’s usage, would be the 9<sup>th</sup> of Abib. What event took place the next day, on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of this first month (John 12:12-14)?

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2. What else was happening on this same day (Exodus 12:3-5)?

At the very time that the Passover lamb was being brought into their homes for preparation of the Passover, Jesus Christ was entering Jerusalem in preparation for the ultimate Passover sacrifice.

Now turn to Luke 22.

“Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.” (Luke 22:7-13)

1. Why were they getting together that evening?
2. Paul says that this happened when? (I Corinthians 11:23-26)
3. What is commonly called the Last Supper was really a Passover meal! Now look at the following three passages:



John 18:28

John 19:31

Matthew 26:2-5

These scriptures all point to the time of year that the crucifixion took place. Jesus Christ, whose blood covers our sins and causes eternal death to pass over us, made the ultimate sacrifice as the Lamb of God at the very time of year that the Passover lamb was sacrificed. In fact, at the very time that the high priest was slaying the lamb and shedding its blood, Jesus Christ was shedding his blood and drawing his last breath.

☞ The official sacrifice of the Passover lamb took place in the temple on the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib. The Biblical days begin and end at sunset (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, etc. and Leviticus 23:32). Thus, both the private celebrations that took place in homes such as Jesus kept with his disciples and the official Passover in the temple both occur on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib. This was the very day our Savior died.

Act 1, Scene 1 of the play thus pointed to this first step in God's salvation plan for the human race, when Jesus Christ came as the unblemished Lamb of God who was to die for our sins and whose blood saves us from death.

On the heels of this sacrifice, God ordained a seven-day festival called in Leviticus 23 and Exodus 12 the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The sacrifice of Jesus is over, but his work is not. The story behind the unleavened bread brings us to the next scene, and that will be the story of the next lesson.

## CHAPTER TWO



# *Feast of Unleavened Bread*

### **Feast of Unleavened Bread: Act 1, Scene 2**

*Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the Lord your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. Sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the Lord will choose as a dwelling for his Name. Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste – so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days.*

*–Deuteronomy 16:1-4 (NIV)*

## Introduction

This passage from Deuteronomy sets the historical context for the Feast of Unleavened Bread: the departure from Egypt in haste, a departure so hasty that there was no time to leaven their bread. To this day the Jewish people celebrate this escape from slavery by removing all leavening and leavened products from their homes during the entire seven days of the festival. Indeed they do remember the time of their departure from Egypt.

In the last lesson we saw how the Passover lamb in its historical context is a reminder of Israel's deliverance from death as they were about to be freed from the slavery of their Egyptian masters, and that each year a Passover lamb was sacrificed and consumed, none of which was to remain until morning (Exodus 12:8-10). This was a memorial that was to be kept throughout their generations (verse 14). But we also saw that this was an historical prototype of the true Lamb of God that was to follow.

☞ The Feast of Unleavened Bread has not only historical significance, but also a Christological and Soteriological one. (Remember the Four Understandings referred to in the Introduction of Act 1, Scene 1).

First, let's see what Leviticus 23 says about these days.

## Study Questions

*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. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 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 uncustomary work on it. (Leviticus 23:6-8)*

1. What does Leviticus tell us about the first and seventh days of this Festival?

☞ The first and seventh days of these Festivals came to be known as High Days. The laws of the weekly Sabbath applied to them because in fact they were annual Sabbaths. Many have not realized that during the week of Jesus' crucifixion there were two Sabbaths, the first an annual High Day Sabbath and the second the normal weekly Sabbath. An understanding of this fact clarifies some of the scriptures related to the timing of many events in the last week of Jesus' earthly life. We'll cover more of this in the next lesson (Act 1, Scene 3).

2. Refer back to Leviticus 23:5. Was the day of the Passover (i.e., the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib) a holy convocation?

The day of the Passover sacrifice was not of itself a holy convocation or annual Sabbath. That explains why the religious leaders of Jesus' day were able to conduct their "business" of trying him in their kangaroo court and turning him over to the Romans for execution without violating the letter of the Sabbath law. An annual High Day Sabbath was the very next day.

3. They were to change their diets for seven days. Now turn to Exodus 12:15. Not only were they to eat unleavened bread, what were they to do with any of the leavening in their homes?

This might seem strange to us, but remember that God was trying to teach Israel – and us – some object

lessons by having them act out this simple religious exercise. Leaven is a symbol, and an apt one, for it permeates whatever it touches and changes it.

4. Read the following scriptures and list how leaven is used metaphorically in these passages.

Matthew 16:6 – 12.

Luke 12:1

Matthew 13:33

I Corinthians 5:6 – 8

In three of the four references, leaven refers to some form of sin. In one (Matthew 13:33) it refers to the Kingdom of God. The point is this: whatever leaven touches, it permeates and changes it. That is true of both sin and of the Kingdom of God. As we'll see, Paul used the metaphor of leaven in his first letter to the Corinthian church to illustrate how their failure to deal with sin among them was affecting (or should we say "infecting") them all.

### **Paul, Passover, and the Days of Unleavened Bread**

*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. (I Corinthians 5:1 – 2)*

Paul begins Chapter 5 of I Corinthians by correcting the church regarding a very public sin that brought dishonor to them as a group because of their failure to deal with it. He says two things that are important for purposes

of this study. 1) They are “puffed up” or “arrogant” (RSV) or “proud” (NIV) about it. What does leaven do to a batch of dough but puff it up? 2) The man who was guilty should be put away from them (see verse 2 with verses 5 and 13 and the NIV of verse 2).

☞ Before the days of Unleavened Bread, God instructed the Israelites to put leaven out of their homes (Exodus 13:7). In this passage Paul uses the metaphor of leaven to illustrate to the Corinthians that they are puffed up and that they should remove sin from their midst.

Paul used this wording in verses 1 and 2 for their metaphorical meaning, but there was also another reason. The church at Corinth (even though it was primarily a Gentile church) understood something about unleavened bread and its meaning that we would do well to understand too. Paul was about to use that understanding to drive home a lesson.

Your glorying (boasting – NIV) 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. (I Corinthians 5:6-7)

Again, notice the metaphors: A little bit of leaven, just like a little bit of sin, will infect the whole body. Put the sin out of your life just like you put leaven out of your homes. Christ by his death as the true Passover Lamb made you “unleavened”, or purged of all sin.

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.  
(Verse 8, emphasis added)

Paul's comments bring to mind the words of Conybeare and Howson: "[T]he festivals observed by the apostolic church were, at first, the same as those of the Jews; and the observance of these was continued, especially by Christians of Jewish birth, for a considerable time" (Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, page 346). Evidently, the church at Corinth was keeping the feast, and the internal evidence of I Corinthians points toward a time of authorship around Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

That the Corinthians kept and understood the meaning of these days made easier Paul's job of explaining the consequences of sin and how to deal with it. In effect he says, "You should be spiritually unleavened because of the sacrifice of Jesus, but you are not. You did a good job of casting the physical leaven out of your homes, but you need to take that lesson to heart and now cast the spiritual leaven out of your lives. Cast out your malice, cast out your pride, cast out your wickedness, and, yes, 'put out of your fellowship' (Verse 2, NIV) the one who is committing incest in your congregation. If you don't, the sin of one will hurt you all."

## CHAPTER THREE



# *Wave Sheaf Offering of Firstfruits*

### **Acts 1, Scene 3: Wave Sheaf Offering of Firstfruits**

*And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "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. (Leviticus 23:9-14)*

## **Introduction**

We have seen how Act 1 of this serial points to the part of God's plan relating to the salvation we enjoy through Jesus Christ. Passover shows us that we are in need of a Redeemer and points toward the sacrifice of Jesus' body and blood so that our sins could be forgiven. The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that, even though the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to forgive our sins, we still need to be diligent to walk away from a life of sin. Just as the Corinthian church had put physical leaven out of their homes, so should we put the leaven of sin out of our lives.

But there is more to what God is doing with us, and there is more to the salvation story than the payment for our sins and change in our lives. God gave Israel a ritual to perform during the Days of Unleavened Bread that illustrates part of that story.

Before we begin, notice these words about the wave sheaf from Leviticus 23: "... 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."

## **Study Questions**

1. The New Testament makes reference to "firstfruits". Who is referred to as the firstfruits? I Corinthians 15:20-23.

2. In similar vein, Jesus is the “first” in other ways: Hebrews 1:6, Colossians 1:15, Revelation 1:5, Romans 8:29.

☞ Many of the Feasts of the Lord became harvest festivals after Israel entered the land. In verse 10 of Leviticus 23, God told the Israelites that they were to perform the wave sheaf offering “when you come into the land”. When they were in the wilderness, they only had manna, not barley or wheat to offer. After the Israelites came into the land, the spring Holy Days revolved around the barley harvest. This brings to mind how Jesus used the word “harvest” metaphorically. See Matthew 9:37-38; 13:30, 39; Mark 4:29; Luke 10:2; John 4:27-35.

After the people entered the Promised Land, they were to take the very first sheaf of the barley harvest and bring it to the priest to present it before God as an offering, which God would accept.

This would happen during the Days of Unleavened Bread on the day after the Sabbath. Remember that the Sabbath begins and ends at sunset (Leviticus 23:32), so Biblically speaking this could have happened any time after sunset on Saturday through sunset on Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

How long did Jesus say he would be in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40)? The traditional teaching is that Jesus spent parts of three days and parts of three nights in the grave, yet Jesus was explicit in saying that he would be in the grave for three days and three nights.

The Scriptures do say that Jesus was killed on the Preparation Day for the Sabbath (Mark 15:42), which certainly seems like a Friday. But John’s gospel (19:31) tells us that the Sabbath in question was a “High Day”. We know from earlier lessons that this “High Day” was the first annual High Holy Day of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

In other words, there were two Sabbaths that week, the first being the annual Sabbath (or High Day), and the second the normal weekly Sabbath.

Therefore the Preparation Day for the Sabbath that Mark mentions does not need to be a Friday in order to be consistent.

In fact, quite often the first High Day of the Passover season falls on a Thursday, and if that happened in the year of the crucifixion, the day of the crucifixion would have been a Wednesday. Jesus' burial near sunset on that day would have him in the grave from Wednesday evening around sunset until Saturday evening at sunset (three days and three nights), which would correspond to the very time that Israel would be allowed to take the firstfruits of the barley harvest and offer them to God. Do you see the parallel between the firstfruits and the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

## **The Importance of the Resurrection**

The death of Jesus is an important part of our salvation, but without the resurrection, we have no hope.

1. Romans 5:10 -- Read this verse. Consider this: We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. But this verse says we're saved, not by his death, but by his \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).
2. I Corinthians 15:3 – Fill in the blank. “Christ died for our \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. Romans 4:24 - 25 (New King James) – “It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our \_\_\_\_\_, and was raised because of our \_\_\_\_\_.”

4. I Corinthians 15:22 (New King James) – “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be \_\_\_\_\_.”

☞ The death of Jesus Christ is a cornerstone of Christian theology, but so is the resurrection. The death of Christ and resurrection of Christ accomplished different things. Though his death covers our sins, that by itself does not give us eternal life. These verses clearly show that it is by his resurrection that we have life, for it was through the resurrection that Jesus Christ defeated death (Romans 5:10).

## **A Word about Holy Convocations**

We are going to conclude this lesson by turning back to Leviticus 23. All of the days mentioned in this chapter are special days in God’s sight, but not all of them are High Days on which holy convocations were convened. A “holy convocation” is a meeting that took place in connection with a Sabbath.

The 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (the Lord’s Passover) is not called a holy convocation, but the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> (the first and last days of Unleavened Bread) are called Holy Convocations (Leviticus 23:4 – 8).

The Day of the Wave Sheaf Offering of Firstfruits is not called a holy convocation. This was not a Sabbath day, but in fact was the first day of barley harvest, a regular work day. This harvest was also a type of a significant part of God’s plan. Not only was Jesus Christ the firstfruits, James says that the Father “chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.” (James 1:18, NIV) That will be the subject of Act 2.

## CHAPTER FOUR



# *Pentecost: The Feast of Weeks*

### Act 2: Feast of Weeks

*“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.” (Leviticus 23:15-16)*

*Now 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 mighty rushing 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. (Acts 2:1-4)*

## Introduction

After Jesus rose from the dead, he told his disciples to “stay in the city [of Jerusalem] until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49b NIV) Whatever this “power” is, it is something that Jesus was going to send as promised by the Father (verse 49a).

This should have been nothing new to the disciples, for Jesus had told them just a few days before that he would “pray the Father, and he will give you another Helper, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive ...” (John 14:16-17).

A little later that same evening Jesus said, “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you.” (John 16:7)

The coming of this Helper (or Comforter – KJV) would prove to be a mighty event in the history of the God’s people, and some 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this power did come, and it came in a dramatic and public way. In Acts 2, we get the strong impression that God had long before appointed the date for the coming of the Holy Spirit just as he had appointed the dates for the death and resurrection of Christ.

## Study Questions

1. Leviticus 23:15-16. Note that this is the only Holy Day that appears not to have a specific day of a specific month assigned to it. How were the Israelites to determine the date of this Holy Day?
2. What is this day called in the New Testament? (Acts 2:1). The word “Pentecost” is a transliteration of the Greek “pentekoste”, which

means “count fifty”. It can be seen from this passage that the disciples of Jesus were assembled together and observing this day, and it was on this day that God chose to send the Holy Spirit to reside in them. (Note that Jesus made a distinction between the Holy Spirit being “with” you and being “in” you in John 14:17).

☞ Besides being known as Pentecost, the day is also variously referred to as “The Feast of Harvest” (Exodus 23:16), “The Feast of Weeks” (Deuteronomy 16:9-10), and “The Day of Firstfruits” (Numbers 28:26). It is important to keep in mind that in ancient times this was a harvest festival celebrating the early grain. Those of us who have the Holy Spirit today are called a “kind of firstfruits” (James 1:18), and that we have “the firstfruits of the Spirit” (Romans 8:23).

3. If we count fifty days from the Sabbath that takes place during the Days of Unleavened Bread (which took place near the middle of the first month of the year), we find that Pentecost is to take place early in the third month of the year. Historically, what important event happened around that time? (Exodus 19 – 20). The Ten Commandments were written in stone at about that time of year. While there is no sure proof of this, many Rabbis teach that the Ten Commandments were given on this day. Regardless of the accuracy of this tradition, it is scripturally correct to say that the Ten Commandments were given some time around the time of Pentecost.

God wrote the Law of God in tablets of stone, and in Exodus 24 Israel and God ratified a covenant, with Israel solemnly promising that “all the Lord has said we will do and be obedient” (verse 7, and see also verse 3). We know that Israel rarely lived up to the covenant, and there was a reason for this. Many years later, after Joshua had led the nation into the Promised Land, he warned them that “you cannot serve the Lord for he is a holy God.” The protestations of the people notwithstanding, they as a nation in fact did fall short, for God did not write it on their hearts, but only on stone.

In the days of Jeremiah, God made a promise regarding a new covenant. Read these verses from Jeremiah 31:31-34:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 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." (NKJV)

Psychologists often use the term “internalize”, meaning that a concept or habit becomes such a part of our inner being we don’t even have to think about that habit or



concept any more. That's exactly what God wants to do with his law – he wants to write it on our hearts so that it becomes an unquestioned part of our character. He wants us to become holy, as he is holy (Leviticus 20:7). He wants us to get to the point where the thought of stealing, or lying, or adultery, or hatred, or selfishness, or irreverence does not even enter our minds, for his law is written indelibly on our hearts. The Law of God, once written on stone, must now reflect every aspect of our character, but it cannot do so without the Holy Spirit being in us. And the Holy Spirit, as Jeremiah shows, is an integral part of the New Covenant that God has made with us.

4. In Jesus' final discussion with his disciples before his crucifixion, he made reference to the coming of the Holy Spirit: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you." (John 16:7-8 NKJV) What would this Helper do? See verses 13-14.
  
5. Read John 14:16-17, 25-26. Notice how the Holy Spirit gives a depth of understanding that the natural mind can't seem to grasp. Paul wrote of this in I Corinthians 2: " 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from

God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:9-15 NKJV)

6. Read Galatians 5:22-25. How will the presence of the Holy Spirit manifest itself in our lives?

In Acts 2, on the very day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came and “filled” (verse 4) the 120 disciples who were gathered together, and they began to speak in other languages (“tongues”) so that “everyone heard them speak in his own language” (verse 6). Peter, in the sermon that followed, reminded them of the words from the prophet Joel. Joel said that in the last days God would “pour out of My Spirit on all flesh” (verse 17). The fact that this key event in God’s plan transpired on one of the High Holy Days is an indication that these days have a special significance to God, and they should for us too.

\* \* \* \*

We have studied the Holy Days that have already had their latter fulfillment. In the following lessons, we’ll study the Holy Days that point to events that have not yet occurred.

## CHAPTER FIVE



# *Day of Trumpets*

### **Act 3, Scene 1: Day of Trumpets**

*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "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.'" (Lev 23:23-25 NKJV)*

After Pentecost there is a long, dry, hot summer in the Middle East. Not until the seventh month of the year, typically straddling September and October, is there another Holy Day, and that Holy Day ushers in a scene of jubilation and victory.

This day is a day of “blowing of trumpets”, but a quick search of a Hebrew lexicon reveals that this phrase is translated from the Hebrew word *teruwah*, which can mean “an alarm, a signal, a sound of tempest, a shout, a shout or

blast of war or alarm or joy” (from *The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*, Copyright (c)1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.) Note that the word *shophar* is not used in this verse.

So it isn't just a Day of Trumpets. It is also a day of shouting, a day of an alarm, a sound of tempest, and a blast of war, alarm, and joy.

As we'll see, the symbols of this day point directly to the next step in God's great plan. Consider the following scriptures:

Joel 2:1-2: *Blow the trumpet* (Hebrew: *shophar*) in Zion, and sound *an alarm* (Hebrew: *ruwa*) 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.

Zephaniah 1:14-16: 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 (shophar) and alarm (teruwah)* against the fortified cities and against the high towers.

Psalms 47:5-7: God has gone up with a shout (*teruwah*), the LORD with the sound of a trumpet

(*shophar*). Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding.

Psalms 98:4-9: Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises. Sing to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of a psalm, with trumpets and the sound of a horn (*shophar*); shout joyfully (*ruwa*) before the LORD, the King. Let the sea roar, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it; let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before the LORD, for He is coming to judge the earth. With righteousness He shall judge the world, and the peoples with equity.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the *voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God*: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Revelation 10:7: But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

Matt 24:29-31: 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.

1 Cor 15:50-54: Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at *the last trumpet*. For *the trumpet will sound*, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Rev 19:1: After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"

These are a sampling of the scriptures that bear some reference to the Holy Day commonly known as the Day of Trumpets. It would anti-climactic to try to add to the clear direction that scripture points us regarding the meaning of this day from an eschatological (end time) point of view.

It has been a long time since the Pentecost of Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit made a dramatic appearance in the upper room. Yet Jesus Christ has still not returned. Yet this makes sense because in the same way it is a long, hot summer between Pentecost and the Day of Trumpets.

The day will mark a judgment upon this world's system of government, but it will be one of salvation for the people of God. The dead in Christ will rise, who will live and reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4). The Kingdom of God will be on the earth, with Jesus Christ himself ruling as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## CHAPTER SIX



# *Day of Atonement*

### **Act 3, Scene 2: The Holy Day that's not a Feast**

*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. (Leviticus 23:27-32 NKJV)*



The next day in the sequence of Holy Days is the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur in Hebrew. Technically it cannot be called a feast day because the instructions for the day include the command to “afflict your souls”. That term means to “humble yourselves” and is translated so in Ezra 8:21 in the NKJV. (The King James translates it “afflict ourselves”). That passage in Ezra identifies the term with fasting.

The writer of Hebrews addresses what happened in the temple on the Day of Atonement. In chapter 9 of that book, we read that the high priest went “behind the veil” into the Holy of Holies (or “Holiest of All” – NKJV) alone once a year. That happened on the Day of Atonement, where the priest made a special sacrifice for himself and for the people’s sins. In verses 11 & 12 we read, “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle ... not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.”

Clearly, this day points to Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for our sins. It portrays the atonement, or covering, that the blood of Christ provides for our sins. But herein is an apparent conundrum. The very first Holy Day (Passover) depicted this very same event in salvation history. Yet the Day of Atonement seems to depict the same thing, only it occurs much later in the year and shortly after the Day of Trumpets, which depicts the return of Christ. Thus the Day of Atonement, at least on the surface, seems to be wholly out of place.

But the day is not out of place, for it reveals another aspect of the sacrifice Jesus made at Calvary, the importance of which will be apparent to the unsaved world only after his return.

## The Lesson from Jonah

For whatever reason, the Book of Jonah is read in synagogues on the Day of Atonement. I believe that this is not by accident. People often think of the story of Jonah and the Whale merely as a children's story with a moral lesson. God tells Jonah to warn the pagan city of Nineveh about coming destruction unless they repent. Jonah balks at this because Nineveh is the sworn enemy of Israel and the last thing Jonah wants is for that city to repent. Good patriot that he is, he wants to see the enemies of his nation destroyed, and he is afraid that the city would repent at his preaching and be spared, leaving them free to conquer his people. He tries to run away from his responsibilities, but through a series of miracles Jonah ends up in Nineveh, preaches God's warning to them, and sure enough they humble themselves and fast before God, after which God decides to spare them.

So what does this have to do with the Day of Atonement? The key is found in the very last verse of the book, where God says, "Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left?" (Jonah 3:11)

In effect, God is saying that he felt sorry for these people because they just didn't know better! Now let's go back to Hebrews 9 and read more closely verse 7 and what it says about the sacrifices to be made on the Day of Atonement: "But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered from himself and for *the people's sins committed in ignorance.*" (Hebrews 9:10 NKJV, Emphasis added. So also the NIV and the NASB. The King James sadly obscures the full force of the meaning of this verse).

The sacrifice at the cross forgives sins that we know are sins, but it also provides a covering for sins even if

people don't know that they are sinning. That certainly does not imply that sins committed in ignorance are harmless, but it does echo what Jesus once said: "That servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, much will be required." (Luke 12:47 – 48 NKJV)

All sin is serious business, but it appears that God looks at people differently if they don't know better.

The timing of this Holy Day depicts a time after the return of Christ, and as such it is a day of hope as much as a day of humility. It depicts a time when God takes off the blinders that so many are wearing. People will no longer be deceived and as such have an opportunity to repent and accept the blood of the Lamb.

Indeed, deception will end for the great deceiver, Satan, who will be free no longer to deceive the world (Revelation 20:1-3). Curses brought upon ourselves because our ignorance will be a thing of the past, for there will be no devil to spread the lies that have cursed the world since the Garden of Eden.

## **The Two Goats**

In Leviticus 16 God gave a most curious ritual to be associated with the Day of Atonement. Two goats were to be set aside, one to be sacrificed and the other was to have all the sins of the people placed on its head. This second goat (referred to as the "scapegoat") was brought into the wilderness where it was allowed to "escape". In Hebrew, the word translated scapegoat is *azazel*, and literally means "goat of departure".

Some quarters of the ancient Jewish world taught that Azazel was a proper name for one of the desert demons, and from this the teaching grew that Azazel represents Satan. The ritual of confessing the people's sins over its head and then forcing that goat into the wilderness would thus represent the placing on Satan's head his responsibility for our sins (he deceives the whole world and thus bears some of the responsibility for the mess the world is in.)

The goat is then sent into the wilderness, even as Satan will be bound for a thousand years in the bottomless pit. This understanding teaches that the first goat that is sacrificed represents Christ.

Others teach that both goats represent two different facets of the sacrifice of Christ. This writer leans toward the first explanation.

## **Passover and Atonement Compared**

There is one final aspect about this day that is not readily apparent, but fits nicely with the timing of this holy day and rituals surrounding it.

Remember that the ritual surrounding Passover originally was a family event. Every household was to sacrifice a lamb. Every individual was intimately involved in the event and personally took part. The sacrifices and rituals of the Day of Atonement, on the other hand, were the purview of the priesthood and especially the high priest on behalf of the people (Hebrews 9:7, Leviticus 16:15, 14, 33).

While Passover shows us that Jesus died for each and every one of us and that our salvation is a very personal thing, Atonement seems to point to our corporate sins as a nation and a people. Whereas the Old Covenant was made with a nation, the New Covenant as it stands today is made with us as individuals (not with a physical nation but with called out ones from all backgrounds and ethnicities). How

## THE FEAST DAYS OF LEVITICUS 23

fitting that God will forgive our sins not only as individuals but as a people and will one day make a covenant with the nations of the world. (Isaiah 2:1-4, Zechariah 14:16-21)

## CHAPTER SEVEN



# *Feast of Tabernacles*

### **Act 3, Scene 3: Feast of Tabernacles**

*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. (Leviticus 23: 34-36 NKJV)*

The seventh month of the year seems to have been one of both celebration and reflection. The final crops of the year were coming in, and it was a time to thank God for the bounty with which he had blessed the nation. The Feast of Tabernacles was a sort of Thanksgiving festival to be celebrated as

they “gathered the crops of the land” (Leviticus 23:39 NIV).

Yet, in the context of the Scriptures as a whole, it is much more than that. This Festival illustrates how the annual Feasts of the Lord can mean many things on many levels. For example:

1. **Historical:** If we were to read only Leviticus 23 in reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, we would notice that God commanded the Israelites to live in temporary dwelling places (Hebrew: *sukkot*), commonly referred to as “booths” or “tabernacles”. Such living arrangements served as a reminder, that their “generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” (verse 43)
2. **Soteriological** (or salvation related): In the New Testament, the word tabernacle is often used figuratively to represent our mortal, physical bodies. (II Corinthians 5:1-5, II Peters 1:13-14). In the same way that the Israelites lived in temporary dwellings (tabernacles or booths) during their sojourn in the wilderness, so we find our dwelling in our temporary earthly tabernacles which we will one day, at Christ’s return, put off. God has reserved in heaven for us a tabernacle “not made with hands” (II Corinthians 5:1 KJV) that our “mortality might be swallowed up in life” (verse 5 KJV). Interestingly enough, in synagogues the Book of Ecclesiastes is read during the Feast of Tabernacles. That book emphasizes the temporary nature of this life

3. **Christological:** In John 1:14 we read, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The Greek word “dwelt” is derived from the word *skenoo*, which literally means to pitch one’s tent or tabernacle with (See *Robertson’s New Testament Word Pictures* for John 1:14). Jesus literally “tabernacled” with us, and these days point to his coming in the flesh to walk among us.
4. **Eschatological** (or related to the end time): Revelation 21:1-3 (KJV) tells us that the Father’s throne will one day be on the earth. Verse 3 reads, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell (“tabernacle”) with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

In ancient Israel, those who kept the Feast of Tabernacles were to “celebrate” and “be joyful” (Deuteronomy 16:13, 14 NIV). It was to be family time, and for seven days they were to celebrate God’s blessings (verse 15). It is commonly viewed that this permission to celebrate was a type of the Messianic Kingdom on earth, the “thousand years” of Revelation 20, frequently referred to as the Millennium.

### **Solomon’s Kingdom and the Messianic Kingdom**

It is possible to look at Solomon’s kingdom as a type of the Messianic Kingdom, or Millennium, when Jesus Christ himself will rule the kingdoms of this world.

Those who make this connection point out that Solomon dedicated the First Temple during the seventh month of the year at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles (I Kings 8:2, 65). Note these parallels between how things



were in Solomon's day versus how they will be after Jesus returns:

1. Solomon's kingdom was a time of peace (I Kings 4:24). So it will be when Christ returns (Isaiah 2:2-4).
2. Prosperity was the norm. Everyone had their own piece of productive real estate. (I Kings 4:25) In the Messianic Kingdom it will be the same (Micah 4:4).
3. People came from the world over to learn from King Solomon, just as they will once again all go up to Jerusalem to learn wisdom from the King of kings. (I Kings 4:34, 10:1-3, 24, Isaiah 2:3).
4. God gave rest to Solomon's kingdom (I Kings 5:4), even as we should strive to enter into God's rest (Hebrews 4:1-11).
5. There was no adversary (Hebrew: *satan*) in Solomon's kingdom (I Kings 5:4), just as Satan will be bound during the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3).
6. Near the end of Solomon's reign, God allowed an adversary (Hebrew: *satan*) to arise. Satan, at the end of the millennium, will be loosed for a short while (Revelation 20:7-8).
7. The Temple in Jerusalem was to be a house of prayer for all nations, not just for Israelites (I Kings 8:41-43). One day all nations will seek God (Zechariah 9:20-23, Micah 4:1-2).

Solomon's day was a time of great advances in science and exploration (I Kings 4:29, II Chronicles 9:21-22). For the Israelites it was a time of unmatched prosperity and peace, just as it will be for the entire world when Jesus returns as King to rule with righteousness for the benefit of all.

## **Conclusion**

While one can make a connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and Jesus' Millennial rule on the earth (and that connection certainly fits nicely in this act of the play), the days help us understand other lessons God wants us to learn.

He wants us to know that we currently dwell in physical, temporary bodies that will one day pass away, and that this present evil world will also one day pass away.

We are merely pilgrims in this world, passing through in temporary dwellings (these physical bodies), and that our real, permanent home awaits us at some future time when we are resurrected to rule with Jesus for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

But what will happen after that thousand years? An entire eternity awaits us, and that is pictured in the final scene of Act 3.

## CHAPTER EIGHT



# *God's Unfinished Business*

### **Act 3 Scene 4: The Eighth Day Festival**

*For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work. (Leviticus 23:36 NIV)*

*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. (John 7:37NKJV)*

After the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, God tells us to hang around for another day for a “closing ceremony” (NIV). It is almost like God saying, “The seven days are complete. The time is done. Now stay with me for a day when time is complete.”(See *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah*, by Edward Chumney, page 188). After the

thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ, there is an eternity that follows.

In the book of Ecclesiastes (the book that is read in synagogues during the Feast of Tabernacles) we read, “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (3:11 NIV) The Last Great Day of the Feast addresses eternity and finishes the story of what God is doing from beginning to end.

But before God fulfills his ultimate aim, he needs to attend to some unfinished business.

### **The Three Big Questions**

I am personally indebted to my Junior High English teacher who one day wrote on the blackboard three questions that literally changed my life:

Who am I?

Where did I come from?

Where am I going?

That one day in English class piqued the interest of at least this student, and it led me on a quest to find some answers. If God is who he says he is, then surely he must have revealed his purpose for his human children somewhere. If God is not who he says he is (or doesn't exist at all), then none of those questions are even worth asking, and to even consider that a loving God has a plan for the human race would be a nonsense question.

The Eighth Day Festival, sometimes referred to as the Last Great Day, tells us what life is all about. It tells us why God is doing what he is doing. It tells us that God's creation is not yet complete and won't be until he takes care of a few items of unfinished business, both at the end

of the millennial Messianic Kingdom and for eternity beyond.

### **What Happens After Everything Happens?**

1. What happens after the millennium, the thousand years of peace and prosperity on earth under the rulership of Jesus the King? (Revelation 20:7-15 and Revelation 21: 1-14 ff).

God needs to deal with a number of things after the millennium, including both Satan's final judgment, the final judgment of people who did not know Christ, and what happens for all eternity thereafter when God "will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:4) We're going to deal with what happens in eternity first and discuss the final judgment later.

2. Read Romans 8:15-22. How does God look upon us? Notice the words "sonship" (as translated in the NIV, or "adoption" as in most other translations), "Abba, Father", "God's children", "co-heirs with Christ", "share in his glory".

To be a co-heir with Christ, to be called sons of God, to share in Christ's glory would clearly imply that we are to inherit whatever Jesus is to inherit. Certainly that includes eternal life, but is God's sole purpose to simply grant eternal life and that's it? Does God have something larger planned for his creation?

3. Hebrew 2:5-8 (NKJV) reads: But one testified in a certain place, saying, "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels. You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

The writer of Hebrews is quoting from Psalm 8, one of the Psalms of David. Picture David as a young shepherd on a clear night looking up into the heavens and asking the questions that mankind has always asked and always will ask. We are made with a mind that desires to understand the ultimate questions: What is man? Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? It is right that we ask such things because God has given us minds that desire to understand ultimate reality.

Hebrews 2 gives us the simple answer to those questions. We have been made a little lower than the angels, and we have been put over the works of His hands, at least here on earth. And it is right and good for us to look up to the heavens, be in awe of them, to ask questions about them, and dream of exploring them, for one day even the vastness of the universe will be under our feet. "For in that he put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him."

When Paul wrote to the Romans that we are co-heirs with Christ, he meant exactly that. If Jesus is heir of all things, so are we! If all that we see and all that we don't see belong to God, and if all things

are to be delivered to Christ (Luke 10:22, I Corinthians 15:24-28), then we, as co-heirs, can expect to inherit the same very good things from the Father.

The prophets of the Old Testament describe in great detail the peace and prosperity that God has planned for the world during the Messianic Kingdom. But for the time beyond that we are only given the broadest outlines. Perhaps it is because our finite minds simply cannot comprehend it. Paul writes in I Corinthians 2:9, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Perhaps we are not told much about what exactly will transpire during eternity because much will be up to us to decide. Is it conceivable that God, who is love, created what he did, not so that he could rule it, but because he wanted to share it? And as the one who is willing to share it, would he not also be willing to give to us the freedom to decide what eternity will be like?

These questions are good ones to ask, and only time can give us the answers to these questions. Nevertheless, God does give us some insight into what is going to happen for eternity:

1. Isaiah 9:6-7 -- The increase of his government and peace will have no end.
2. Luke 1:31-33 -- His kingdom will never end.
3. Revelation 21:3-4 -- God the Father will live with his people. There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more suffering.

4. Revelation 21:8 -- There will be no sin, evil, false gods.
5. Isaiah 65:17 -- There won't even be a memory of suffering.

## **Some Unfinished Business**

But there is still some business that must be finished before God's plan can get to that point. God still needs to deal with Satan, and he still needs to deal with the mass of humanity who never accepted the true God of Israel and the Savior of mankind. Let's go back to Revelation 20.

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth -- Gog and Magog -- to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Verses 7 – 10 NIV)

Remember that at the beginning of the millennium Satan is bound in the "bottomless pit", or "Abyss" (NIV), where he is essentially held in a place of restraint where he can deceive the nations no longer. Verses 7 – 10 tell us that he'll gain his freedom for a short while, but will then face a judgment.

What will this judgment be? This is one of those areas where the Bible gives some clues, but not a definitive



answer. Some people point to Jude 13 and conclude that the “wandering stars” mentioned there indicate that the devil and his demons will be condemned to the outer darkness beyond the universe as we know it, never again able to influence anything and left in misery for all eternity.

Others point to Ezekiel 28, which most commentators agree refers in type to Satan, and note that verse 18 has the phrase “I turned you to ashes upon the earth”, and that verse 19 says he “shall be no more forever.” Combine this with Revelation saying that devil will be thrown into the lake of fire, and it’s easy to see how someone can conclude that Satan’s fate is utter annihilation.

Scripture is not clear on this question, except for the assurance that justice will be rendered. In fact, Paul in I Corinthians makes an interesting comment, almost a throw-away line, when addressing the church at Corinth about some of that congregation’s internal problems. The people in that congregation were suing each other at law, and Paul feels obliged to remind them that they should be able to render such judgments within the structure of the congregation, for they will one day judge angels! (I Corinthians 6:3)

Satan’s fate could very well be one of those questions that God has simply not decided yet, but is leaving for us to decide, for we along with the Corinthians will one day judge angels. If we are going to judge angels, maybe we’ll be the ones who are not only deciding guilt or innocence, but also deciding the penalty for their crimes.

Someday we’ll know the answer to these questions, but we can rest assured that justice will be done and nothing vile will ever again disgrace God’s creation (Revelation 21:8).

## **More Unfinished Business: Who Is Winning the Battle for Souls?**

Look at world around you, and you'll see that the majority of the people in the world today do not accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Throughout history Christians have been the minority, and in the Old Testament period even fewer people accepted the true God of Israel.

1. What is the only name by which the human race can be saved? (Acts 4:12)
2. What is God's will regarding mankind and salvation? (I Peter 3:9, I Timothy 2:4)
3. What did Jesus say regarding the Christian way of life? (Matthew 7:14) Does it seem from this statement that many or few will find the way?

On the one hand, God is not willing that any should perish. On the other Jesus says that only a few will find the way. It should certainly seem to an unbiased observer that either Satan is winning the battle for souls, or God is terribly unjust in allowing so many to be born without any hope of salvation.

If there is a disconcerting doctrine that Eastern Religions and Western Secularists both use to discredit Christianity, it is a doctrine that explicitly states that everyone is lost for eternity except for a select few who by accident of birth or happy coincidence heard and accepted the gospel.

Under this teaching, even kindly human beings who did not understand the gospel are condemned to the same fate as the Pol Pots and Joseph Stalins of the world.

Frankly, that concept bothers the sensibilities of many decent folk and in the minds of many calls into question whether the God of the Christian is in fact a loving, caring, and just God. Either that, or Satan is a more powerful being in this battle for souls, for he would be ahead on the body count.

The Bible, however, teaches a different story than what is commonly taught. That is God's unfinished business, and he will rectify it before eternity begins.

### **When the Final Judgment Will Occur**

Revelation 20 discusses "The White Throne Judgment" where great and small will stand before the judgment seat of God.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:11-15 NIV)

In the general time frame of history, this event occurs after Satan meets his fate, and hence is after the millennium. The people in this judgment are briefly

mentioned in verse 5: “The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years are finished.”

We can glean the following facts about this resurrection from Revelation 20.

1. The dead are standing. For them to be standing, they must have been resurrected.
2. “Books” are opened and another book is opened as well, which is called the book of life.
3. The people are judged according to what they had done as recorded in the “books”, not the book of life.
4. If the person’s name is not founded in the book of life, that person is thrown into the lake of fire.
5. Death and Hades are also thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15 presents a broad outline of the final judgment of those who were not in the first resurrection some 1000 years earlier. The Scriptures elsewhere fill in some details.

1. How many resurrections of the dead did Jesus speak of? (John 5:29)
2. In this verse, Jesus speaks of a resurrection of life and a resurrection of “condemnation” (NKJV). What was Jesus teaching here?

☞ The passage, which begins in verse 19, is a contrast and a comparison of those who inherit eternal life and those who do not. More specifically, Jesus speaks of “judging” and “judgment” throughout this passage.

☞ John wrote the Greek words *krisis* (judgment) and *krino* (judge, judges) throughout this dissertation, which are

almost always translated as a form of the word “judge” in English. “The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” “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.”

However, when we get to verses 24 and 29, these words in most versions are translated as “condemnation.” One notable exception is the New American Standard Bible, whose translators aimed for consistency in translation, rendered verses 28-29 as follows: “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

One might be tempted to ask what the difference might be between “condemnation” and ‘judgment’.

If you have ever been before a judge, you know what the answer is. Being before a judge does not necessarily imply guilt and therefore condemnation. It could mean being acquitted of the crime.

Or it could mean being found guilty and being pardoned, or having the sentence suspended.

It could mean being found guilty but put on probation.

Or it could mean being found guilty and being fined, but having the fine paid for by someone else.

The point is, judgment and condemnation are not the same thing. So what happens at the judgment? Do the Scriptures give us a clue?

## **What Will Happen at the Judgment?**

1. Did Jesus imply that different groups of people would be treated differently in the day of judgment? (Matthew 11:20-24)

2. Will there be different judgments rendered based on how much people know? (Luke 12:47-48)
  
3. Is there an indication of the possibility of one group of people being resurrected (rising up) in the judgment and condemning another group? (Matthew 12:41-42)

☞ A word study of verses 41 & 42 should help clarify the words of Jesus. Jesus says that the men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment (*krisis*), will look at the generation that saw Jesus face to face, and will condemn (*katakrino*) that generation. Is this implying that a judgment and a condemnation are two different things? Can one be judged but not condemned?

Let's refer to Matthew 11:20-24. Here Jesus says that the judgment will be more tolerable for some than for others, the difference being whether they knew better (Luke 12:47-48).

It is fair to say that the Scriptures give us a broad outline about this resurrection to judgment, enough of an outline to emphasize that God is both a God of justice and also a God of great mercy. It's apparent that many of the Scriptures discussed above paint a picture of the Last Judgment that is in stark contrast to the traditional teachings of many Christian churches.

Put simply, God holds people responsible for what they know. If they don't know, he won't hold them responsible until they do know, and for many billions of people, that won't be until the second resurrection of Revelation 20.

Based on these passages, it would be reasonable to conclude that the decent human beings throughout history, when presented with the truth of God in the absence of the

devil's influence and deception, will accept the saving grace offered through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It's also apparent from the Scriptures that not everyone will. (See Revelation 21:8, where something called the second death is mentioned. That passage also describes what kind of people will suffer that fate.)

The Gospel is good news, and the good news is that God is not willing that any should perish. Paul rejoices in this Gospel, even though his own nation largely rejected that very good news that Paul preached. In Romans 11 he rejoices in spite of the blindness that God had brought upon them (Romans 11:7-8), a blindness, by the way, that this passage clearly says God gave them! Paul goes on to say this:

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! ... For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ... I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved. (Romans 11:11-12, 15, 25, 26 NIV)

Along with Paul, I rejoice that one day my countrymen will be saved. Indeed, not just my countrymen, but all the men and women of goodwill who will come someday to know their Savior.







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