# God's Appointed Times

## The Seven Holy Feasts of Israel

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The Seven Feasts of Israel are described as *"The Lord's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations."* (Lev. 23:1)

Israel was to proclaim the appointed times of the Lord through celebration of these seven feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Weeks/Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, & Tabernacle/Booths. The first three point to and are fulfilled in the Messianic sacrifice, Weeks/Pentecost points to the church age and harvest, Trumpets points to the rapture of the church, the Day of Atonement points to the seven-year tribulation period humbling Israel, and Tabernacle/Booths points to the 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom.

For redemption to take place, the stage had to be set. Jesus could not have come at any other point in history than the perfect time: Before He came there had to be an unattainable Law to define sin and ultimate righteousness, there had to be a sacrificial system to define the perfect sacrifice for sin, then the complete and undeniable inability of man to satisfy the demands of that Law had to be fully demonstrated. Then, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).

Had Jesus come at any other time, there would be doubt as to whether He came at all. Because of Father's preparation, Jesus came at the perfect time to vanquish all doubt for those who seek truth. There is so much detail woven into the fabric of history and the word of God that believing becomes easy when it is revealed.

One of the places Father chose to reveal His plan and purpose for all time was in the feasts that He commanded Israel to observe. Each of the feasts had historical significance to them, but each one also holds a treasure trove of prophetic information.

## The Feasts

### Passover

**Historical Significance:**

Leviticus 23:4-5, Exodus 11:1-12:13, 21-51

Passover was observed by the Jews for the first time on the night before they were delivered from their bondage in Egypt. It was to happen on the 14th day of the first month, Nisan (Abib). It was to commemorate deliverance from the final plague of judgment upon the Egyptians for mistreating God's people. Remember the blessing of Abraham? In Genesis 12 God says he will bless those who bless him (and his descendants) and curse those who curse him. The

mistreatment by Pharaoh and the Egyptians resulted in curses from the Lord. The Egyptians were the first of many to reap that curse.

The Jews were to select a lamb on the 10th day of the month and put it up until the 14th day of the month. This was to ensure that the lamb was without blemish (Exo. 12:5). The entire nation was to slaughter their lamb at twilight and take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts and lintel of their house. There is a specific reason the blood was not to be placed on the threshold of their houses revealed in Hebrews 10:29.

They were to roast the lamb with fire and eat the entire thing with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Whatever was left over was to be burned with fire. It was to be eaten in a hurry with sandals on, dressed for travel and with a staff in hand (Exo. 12:8-11).

At midnight the Lord passed through the whole land of Egypt and struck down the first-born of man and beast in judgment against the Egyptians, their sin against the Jewish people, and the false gods they worshiped. If the blood of the Lamb was on the posts and lintel of a house, the Lord "passed over" that place and spared their first-born.

There wasn't a home in all of Egypt that escaped judgment somehow (Exo. 12:30). Imagine a house where the mother and father were both the first-born in their families, and they had one child. There would have been no one left alive in that house the next morning.

**Prophetic Significance:**

- Jesus is our Passover Lamb, *"…For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed"* 1Cor. 5:7. The symbolism can't be denied. There is too much there for it to be a coincidence.
- John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29). Jesus is called the Lamb 36 times in the New Testament. What a coincidence!
- It is significant to note that when a Jewish family was selecting their lamb on the 10th day of Nisan, that was the exact day Jesus, the Lamb of God, rode into Jerusalem on a donkey for His triumphal entry to fulfill Zechariah 9:9 (John 12:12-16). While many Jews were selecting their Passover lamb, Jesus was riding into Jerusalem as the people cried out, *"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel."* (John 12:13)
- The lamb was put up for five days and examined closely to be sure it had no blemish (Exo. 12:5). Before Jesus was sent to the cross, He was examined by Annas first, then Caiaphas, and finally Pilate who declared, "I find no fault in Him" (John 18:38).
- The Jews were to apply the blood of the lamb to the doorposts and lintel so that the Lord would pass over their house and not bring judgment upon them. Likewise, those who put their faith in the blood sacrifice of Jesus have the blood applied and their sins forgiven and will be "passed over" for judgment (John 3:18).

- The eighth letter in the Hebrew alphabet is "Chet." Its numeric value is 8, the number of new beginnings. Chet is also considered the letter of life and is ironically in the shape of a square without the bottom, very similar to what it would look like to put blood on the top and two sides of a doorpost.
- Jesus was nailed to the cross at the exact same time as the Chagigas sacrifice was being made in the temple at 9:00 am on the morning of Passover.
- The Jews were not to break any of the bones of the Passover lamb (Exo. 12:46, Num. 9:12, Psa. 34:20). This was fulfilled in John 19:31-36.

**Why it is important today:**

- The Passover celebration was foreshadowing the time when the perfect Lamb of God would deliver us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13). Isn't it interesting that the Jews observed their first Passover before they ever received the Law that the Passover Lamb would deliver them from?
- Jesus delivered us from the certain death required as a penalty for sin (Romans 6:23). We appropriate that by faith in Him. Because of Jesus we are no longer under the Law or the Power of Sin (Romans 6:6 & 14). You are free to walk in the newness of life given by Christ when we believe (Romans 6:3-5).
- The blood of Jesus purchased our forgiveness for sin (Eph. 1:7).
- Passover, as celebrated today among the Jews, has grown into a unique event with many more elements incorporated than that first one in Egypt. Without the Jews realizing it, virtually all the added elements point significantly back to Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

## Unleavened Bread

**Historical Significance:**

Leviticus 23:6-8, Exodus 12:14-20

What does leaven symbolize in the Bible? (Sin, hypocrisy, something that causes change by its influence (good or bad), false doctrine, etc.) Mark 8:14-21, Luke 12:1-3, 13:18-21, 1Cor. 5:1-8, Gal. 5:1-12.

This feast is often considered a continuation of Passover. However, the Lord treated them separately in Leviticus 23. It was to commemorate the Hebrews having to leave Egypt in haste with their bread dough in bowls on their shoulders and before it had been leavened (Exo. 12:34, 39). During the early days of their departure, they baked their bread without leaven.

Part of the reason it is so connected to Passover is that the Jews were instructed to eat the Passover lamb along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exo. 12:8). It can be confusing in Scripture at times because of the way Passover and Unleavened Bread are interwoven. A good example is Mark 14:12 and Luke 22:1 & 7.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be observed on the 15th day of the first month, Nisan (Abib), and last for seven days. The first and last days were holy convocations and no laborious work was to be done. Passover, on the other hand, was observed on the day before.

**Prophetic Significance:**

- There was to be no leaven found in their houses for the seven days of the feast. Seven is the number of completion. Jesus was our unleavened bread and became sin for us (if sin is the true meaning of leaven) 2Cor. 5:21. I believe the seven days without leaven represent the absolute completeness of Jesus' sacrifice.
- The picture of unleavened bread is that of the sinless perfection required by the Law. Jesus said He is the bread of life (John 6:48-51). Only the true bread of life could fulfill that requirement.
- Unleavened bread was also called the "bread of affliction" (Deut. 16:3). Isaiah 53:4-5 describes how Jesus was afflicted.
- Jesus said that His flesh was the bread that gives eternal life (John 6:51). He came in the likeness of human flesh (Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7) as the perfect, sinless sacrifice to deliver us from our old self (Romans 6:6).

**Why it is important today:**

- *"He made Him who knew no sin to be made sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ."* (2Cor. 5:21). You could literally say that this way. He made Him who was unleavened, leavened, so that we might become unleavened like Him.
- *"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."* (John 6:48-51)

## First Fruits

**Historical Significance:**

Exodus 34:26, Leviticus 23:9-14, Numbers 15:17-21

On the first day of the week after Passover the Jews were to bring a First Fruit offering of their barley crop to the temple. The priest would wave it before the Lord for the offeror to be accepted. Tradition says that on the day before the Sabbath or earlier in the week the owner of the crop or the priests would go out into the fields and find the ripest barley and bind it together into a sheaf with a red or scarlet cord. This allowed them to locate it easily on the morning of First Fruits. Early on the morning of First Fruits that sheaf was harvested and raised up/waved before the Lord. This could be done by the priest or by the offeror if not close to the temple.

According to Numbers 15, the First Fruits Offering can be from the dough as well as the sheaves of barley. The barley grain nor the dough could be eaten until the First Fruits Offering had been lifted up to the Lord.

**Prophetic Significance:**

- 1Cor. 15:20-23, Jesus is our First Fruits.
- Jesus said, *"If I be <u>lifted up</u> I will draw all men unto me"* (John 12:32, emphasis mine). He was "lifted up" on the cross and was also "raised up" on the third day.
- Romans 11:16 says that *"if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is also; and if the root be holy, the branches are too."* He became like us (Rom. 8:3, Phil. 2:7), that we might become like Him (2Cor. 5:21).

**Why it is important today:**

- His resurrection guarantees that we can live by His life (Romans 5:10).
- His resurrection as the First Fruits from the dead guarantees that we will receive a redeemed body at His return (Rom. 8:23, 1Cor. 15:50-55).
- We are not made holy because our behavior is good, nor are we made holy because we don't eat certain things, dress a certain way, or go to the right church. We are made holy simply because of faith in what Jesus did for us.
- The rest of the dough or barley crop did nothing to be accepted and made holy. It was all accomplished by the First Fruit Offering. You become holy and accepted simply by putting faith in Jesus, our First Fruit.

## <u>Weeks/Pentecost, *Shavuot*</u>

**Historical Significance:**

Leviticus 23:15-22

Pentecost was 50 days from First Fruits. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost is also a First Fruits Feast. During the year of Jesus' crucifixion, Thursday at twilight began Passover, Friday at twilight began the first day of Unleavened Bread and the Sabbath, and Sunday was First Fruits. So, Pentecost would have been 49 days later. The Jews were to present a new grain offering to the Lord. This would have been from the wheat harvest whereas the First Fruits offering done during the week of Unleavened Bread would have been from the barley harvest.

An interesting aspect of the offering made during this feast is that the bread for the wave offering is to be made with leaven.

We don't know for certain, but Jewish tradition says that God gave them the Ten Commandments at the base of Mt. Sinai on day 50 of their deliverance from Egypt. Thomas Lancaster, pastor of Beth Immanuel Sabbath Fellowship in Wisconsin says, that according to the Midrash, a collection of Jewish oral traditions, the people in the camp saw sound waves in the form of fiery substances. Each commandment, as it left God's mouth, circled the whole

camp and eventually rested on each Jew. He also noted from the Midrash that the people heard God's voice in many different languages. Sounds very familiar, Acts 2:2-6.

**Prophetic Significance:**

- Jesus pointed to the fields as white unto harvest. When the Holy Spirit came and filled the believers on Pentecost, the harvest began and the church/the bride of Christ was born. This began the church age, but the harvest will continue through the tribulation and the millennial kingdom.
- The wave offering with leavened bread symbolizes the new covenant and that our old self has been dealt with through the body of Jesus, our unleavened bread from heaven (Rom. 7:4).
- Jesus said when He went back to the Father He would send the Holy Spirit whose purpose was to empower us and live through us.

**Why it is important today:**

- Pentecost symbolizes the church age and the Holy Spirit coming to fill every believer.
- It is ironic for unbelieving Jews to celebrate the Feast of Weeks/Pentecost because they are celebrating the harvest of Jews and Gentiles into the kingdom of God.
- It is an important contrast to the Old Testament Feast of Weeks which symbolized the giving of the Law. Three thousand died when the Law was given, but three thousand were born again on the day the Spirit came. The Law brings death, but the Spirit brings life!

## Trumpets, *Rosh Hashanah*

**Historical Significance:**

Numbers 29:1-6, Leviticus 23:23-25

This feast day happens on the first day of the Jewish New Year, but the first month of the sacred calendar begins in the spring (Nisan/Abib).

Throughout Scripture the trumpet is used for warnings, celebrations, during battles, in the temple service, and at the announcement or coronation of a king.

This was the only feast day where they were commanded to do nothing but blow trumpets and rest. The priests didn't know what to do with themselves. During all the other feasts they had to present wave offerings of grain and wine, and animal sacrifices. So, tradition says that they quickly came up with some rules for how and when to blow the trumpets on this day. Nowhere in Scripture were they commanded to do this, but it is interesting to see how the Lord uses it anyway.

They came up with a series of blasts on the trumpet to commemorate this feast day: *Tekiah,* one long blast of alarm; *Shevarim,* three medium blasts like wailing; *Terran,* nine short blasts like crying; and *Tekiah Hagedolah,* the longest and loudest blast. Each of these blasts on the trumpet mean various things to the Jewish people, but the most important to us is the *Tekiah Hagedolah.* It is a call to come forth or to arise. It literally means the "Big Tekiah" and is the last trumpet of the service.

If that is to be a picture of what is to come, it matches quite well with what Paul shares in the New Testament. 1Cor. 15:51-52 says, *"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 imperishable, and we shall be changed."*

Also, 1Thes. 4:16-17 says, *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord."*

The unredeemed religious Jews believe the Messiah will come at the sound of the last trumpet at the Feast of Trumpets. Even believing Jews are certain the Lord will return at Rosh Hashanah. We can't be dogmatic about this, but it sure is interesting to investigate.

You might point out that in Mark 13:32 Jesus says, *"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."* In the context of this verse Jesus was referring to His disciples as His future bride. This was the traditional response given when the bridegroom goes back to His Father's house to prepare a place for the new bride.

Another tradition that fits that context is that the Jews celebrated the Feast of Trumpets on two days instead of one as commanded to be sure they celebrate it on the new moon. The members of the Sanhedrin watched for the appearance of the new moon, because no one knew the "day or the hour" that it might appear.

**Prophetic Significance:**

- This feast is a picture of the rapture of the church and the time when all believers, living and gone before, will have their bodies redeemed—changed to be like Jesus, our First Fruit (Romans 8:23, Ephesians 1:5, 1Cor. 15:51-52).

**Why it is important today:**

- The Feast of Trumpets relates to the event we call the rapture of the church.
- Even though they had trumpets made of silver, the trumpets used most often were a hollowed-out ram's horn called a shofar. The unique thing about the shofar is that it must be hollowed out so one can blow through it to make the trumpet sounds. In the same way Jesus emptied Himself (Phil. 2:6-7) so that the wind of the Holy Spirit could move through Him and make the pure sound of the

Father (John 14:10). Likewise, we are called to walk in a manner that allows the Spirit of God to flow through us—yielded to Him.

## Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*

**Historical Significance:**
Leviticus 16:1-34 & 23:26-32

On the Day of Atonement Aaron (or the high priest at the time) was to sacrifice a bull for his own sins, a ram for a burnt offering, and a goat for the sins of the people. After slaughtering the bull, the high priest would take coals and incense from the altar in his censor and blood from the sacrifice into the Most Holy Place. After the smoke of the incense from his censor had drifted over the Mercy Seat, he would sprinkle the blood of the bull onto the east side of it and in front of it. Then, outside of the tabernacle he was to cast lots between two goats with the one whose lot came up for the Lord becoming a sacrifice for sins. He was to do the same with the blood of the goat as he did with the bull to deal with the sins of the people. So, the high priest went into the Most Holy Place two times on one day per year.

The goat that wasn't sacrificed became the scapegoat sent out into the wilderness after Aaron laid his hands on its head and confessed all the sins of the people. All of the wrongdoings of the people were carried on that goat into the wilderness. Both the high priest and the one who carried the goat into the wilderness were to bathe and wash their clothes before coming back into the camp. The high priest was to then offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering for the people, as well as the fat of the sin offering.

At some point in history the Jews decided it could be a bad thing if the scapegoat ever returned to the camp. The remedy was to push the goat off of a cliff in the wilderness so that it died and could not possibly return to the people. Oddly enough, they were breaking the very Law they were seeking to be cleansed from before the sacrifice was hardly complete. Leviticus 16:21-22 says, *"…send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands ready…he shall release the goat into the wilderness."* Pushing the goat off of a cliff to kill it was a deliberate violation of the Law of Moses and demonstrated a lack of faith in what Jehovah had commanded.

Another tradition found in the Talmud, but not in Scripture was to identify the scapegoat with a crimson cord around its neck and one on the door of the sanctuary. When the goat reached the wilderness both cords would turn white, assuring the Jews that their sins had been atoned for and carried away. What a picture of Jesus and a reminder of what Isaiah wrote: *"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall become as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool"* (Isaiah 1:18).

It is recorded in the Talmud that 40 years before the temple was destroyed (in 70 AD) that the cord stopped turning white. This signified that sins were no longer being dealt with through the blood of bulls and goats, and served as a reminder to the Jews that Jesus was the true

sacrificial lamb and scapegoat. This is also confirmation that our sins have been dealt with at the cross in 30 AD.

At this same time, in 30 AD, the temple doors started opening all by themselves overnight. It supposedly took twenty men to close them. As if the veil being torn in two wasn't enough, this showed the Jews that the way into the Holy of Holies is open to all who believe in Jesus.

The Jews see the Day of Atonement as the last chance to repent and be forgiven as the heavenly court makes its final judgment on that day. They see the Day of Atonement as a day of deep affliction and suffering, of humbling oneself. This fits very well with what the Scriptures teach concerning the seven years of tribulation. Israel will endure untold suffering during that period, but it will turn her heart back to God. At the end of the tribulation they will see that Jesus really is their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10), repent (Hosea 6:1-3, Isaiah 53:1-6), and call Him back (Hosea 5:15). At that point every Jew alive will become a believer (Romans 11:26-27). Jesus will return to rescue the remnant of Jews that survived exile in Bozrah (Isaiah 63:1-3).

**Prophetic Significance:**

- Jesus paid the ultimate price as a sacrifice for our sin and literally became sin for us (2Cor. 5:21).
- The high priest in the OT did everything associated with the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement and all that was necessary for the people was to believe. Jesus, our High Priest (Heb. 7:24-27), accomplished everything required to redeem us and all we must do is believe. He doesn't require you to follow the Ten Commandments, work more, try harder, or be better. He didn't save you to work for Him, He saved you so that you could enjoy Him. Because in doing so, He will work through you while you rest in Him (Heb. 4:9).
- The OT high priest was a mediator of the old covenant of Law, but Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant; a covenant in which our sins have been dealt with forever (Heb. 7:27) and He will remember them no more (Heb. 8:12). He doesn't keep a record or write them in a secret book that will suddenly appear one day after you die.
- The animal that was sacrificed to atone for Israel's sins had to be one year old and it only covered their sin for one year (Heb. 10:3-4). Had they used a 50 year old goat it wouldn't have lasted any longer. It was still insufficient. Jesus is eternal, and the perfect sacrifice, and has provided forgiveness once for all time for those who believe (Heb. 10:12). An eternal being as an eternal sacrifice can provide eternal forgiveness.
- Aaron, as the high priest, was to wash his body and put on linen garments especially designed for this event. Upon the death of Jesus on the cross, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body and wrapped it in linen and laid it in the tomb. What a coincidence that the earthly high priest was required to wear garments of linen and our eternal high priest, Jesus, was wrapped in linen (John 19:40).

- After his resurrection Jesus still had to offer His blood on the heavenly altar (John 20:17, Heb. 9:11-12).

**Why it is important today:**

- The Day of Atonement, the sixth *"appointed time,"* points to the seven years of tribulation God will use to turn Israel back to Himself. Israel will suffer greatly during the tribulation. Only one third of them will be left by the end (Zechariah 13:8). The Day of Atonement is a day of humbling yourself before the Lord. This season of seven years will completely humble the Jewish people and serve to turn them to the true Messiah.
- As a believer you now walk in a constant state of forgiveness. He bore all of our sin on the cross, paying the penalty for the whole world (2Cor. 5:19). He didn't bear our sin so that we could go out and set a new world record for sinning. No! He became sin on our behalf that we might be freed from its power (Rom. 6:6-7).

## Tabernacles/Booths, *Sukkot*

**Historical Significance:**
Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Jews were to celebrate the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. For seven days they were to make sacrifices to the Lord and dwell in booths made from trees, palm branches, and willows. This was to remind the Jews that they lived in booths after the Lord brought them out of Egypt.

In contrast to the Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur, the Feast of Booths is a joyous occasion. It was a time of being thankful for all that God had provided from the harvests of grain and fruit. Sometimes this feast was called the Feast of Ingathering. In Jesus' day it was often just called "the feast" because it was the most joyful of them all.

During the feast the Jews would participate in ceremonies that had significant meaning to them. But they also had significant prophetic meaning as well. One of those ceremonies was the water pouring ceremony. Priests would take a golden pitcher and draw water out of the pool of Siloam. It would be carried back to the altar and poured into a silver basin. As the priests would pass, the people would wave their *lulvot* and sing praises to God.

The priests taught that this ceremony was more than just a request for the winter rains. It also represented the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all of Israel during the Messianic Kingdom.

Understanding a little about the water pouring ceremony brings clarity to something Jesus said while attending the feast. *"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"* (John 7:37-38)

In the very next verse John says Jesus was speaking about the Spirit, whom believers would receive. This, in a sense, was also a prophetic fulfillment of the feast because the very celebration is about God dwelling among His people. How much closer does it get to fulfillment than the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of believers?

Another ceremony that took place in the evening was the light show. The priests would put on a light show all night with torch dances while the Levites sang and played music. Part of the show included 75' tall menorahs. How fitting was it then for Jesus to proclaim, *"I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."* (John 8:12)

There is also strong evidence to suggest the birth of Jesus was during the Feast of Tabernacles. It definitely was not December 25th.

**Prophetic Significance:**

- The Feast of Booths/Tabernacles is a prophetic proclamation of the final major appointed time of the Lord—the millennial kingdom. This is the one thousand year period after the tribulation ends where Jesus will reign on the throne of David over the whole world and David will reign as prince under Jesus over Israel (Ezekiel 37:24-25, Jer. 31:1-14, 27-40; 32:37-33:26; Isa. 11:6-9, 35:1-10, 65:17-25, Rev. 20:1-6).
- During the Millennial Kingdom all the unconditional covenants made to Israel will be completely fulfilled.
- The Feast of Tabernacles also points to the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan when the bride, New Jerusalem, becomes His habitation and temple (Rev. 21:1-4, 10-11, 22-23).

**Why it is important today:**

- This period is going to be a joyous occasion like the Feast of Booths is celebrated now. The devil will be imprisoned, the lion and the lamb will lie down together, all things will be restored.