

## Feast Days

There are three main feasts spoken of in the Old Testament: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits and the Feast of Tabernacles. These are all week long celebrations to remember what God has done for His people. They were kept or celebrated at certain times of the year, on certain dates, for a certain amount of time - and all with significance. Each individual feast is a shadow and type of a greater truth and meaning representing what God has done, is doing, and will do in the heavens, the earth and in His people. In all of this Jesus Christ is the center focal point. All of these feasts are found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy and coincide with other important days and feasts such as Passover and the Feast of Trumpets.

The first feast of the year is the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the Passover proceeding and mark the beginnings of God's dealing with the nation of Israel. Their first act of faith was to strike the header and door posts of their homes with the blood of the sacrificed lamb. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. 1 Corinthians 5 tells us that Jesus is our Passover and the 3 Gospels testify that He was killed on the day of the Passover Feast. So, we believe Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover found in Exodus 12. Now, the Feast of Unleavened bread was to start when the Passover ended. The Passover represents Jesus Christ, the lamb of God, redeeming us from the bondage of sin and the world; it was to be eaten in "haste" according to Exodus 12. The scriptures say it a different way in another place: "to day is the day for salvation." In Exodus 12 we are told that the Passover should be eaten "with your loins girded, shoes on your feet and your staff in your hand" - in other words, ready to go. There was and is no time for indecision; "today is the day for salvation."

The Bible exhorts us to get involved in what God is doing. To be a part of it we must believe and repent. What the Feast of Unleavened Bread is pointing to is repentance. What should we believe and why? We must believe that there is a God and creator and that because of sin we are separated from God. We must believe that because of His mercy and love He has provided a way to approach Him and be reconciled to Him. The Scriptures tell us that He requires the penalty of death and that we are all under this sentence. The great

and amazing thing is that He himself came to Earth in the form of a man, Jesus Christ, died for us and paid that penalty. This is the Passover, redeeming us from sin and death. The Feast of Unleavened Bread represents repentance. This is the act of turning from sin and the ways of the world toward God and learning and doing His ways. The feast was to last 7 days and the people were to sweep their houses clean of all the old yeast on the first day. Only unleavened bread was to be eaten the remainder of the week. Paul refers to this Feast in 1 Corinthians 5:6: "Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth." Do you see what our goal should be? We should turn away from our sin and start doing righteousness. Going back to Exodus 12 we see that the feast lasted 7 days, a full week. This tells us that we are to cease from sin and start on a path of righteousness and holiness, not just one day of the week or only when we feel like it. We must be doing His will every day.

When the children of Israel struck the header and door posts with the blood of the lamb, as said before, it was pointing at "the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin." The door represents our walk with God. A doorway is made to be walked through. Keep in mind that this promise from 1 John 1:7 is for those who walk in the light. Our walk is what we are doing. Walking is proactive as opposed to just sitting or living and breathing. It is what we do with what we believe. Ephesians 5:8 speaks plainly of walking in the light, "For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. For, it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret." We have a choice whether to walk in darkness or light, in sin or in righteousness and mercy. Paul prayed in Colossians 1:10 "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread were instituted for times of remembrance of what God has done for His people. In the New Testament this is called “the Lord's Supper.” He told us to remember His death until He comes again. God does not want us to forget the price He paid for us, His blood shed for us, and His body broken for us. He also wants us to remember that as one body we affect one another. Instead of affecting each other with sin He wants us to affect each other with love.

### Feast of Firstfruits

The next feast we see in the Old Testament is the Feast of Firstfruits or Feast of Weeks. This feast corresponded with the spring harvest of the winter grain, such as barley and wheat. The Feast of Tabernacles on the other hand is in the fall with the harvest of fruit and vegetables. Both of these represent God producing in us the fruit of the Spirit which we find spoken of in Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” This is God's focus. It should be ours also. It is the new creation of which the Bible speaks: God forming in us a new heart, being born again, and growing in the Spirit to become sons and daughters of the Lord. It is the knowledge of God that “renews us”, (Colossians 3:10); it is the Gospel that brings forth fruit in us who have heard it (1:6). The word is the seed and the heart is the soil where the seed is planted. The condition of the heart will determine how the word grows. This understanding is found in Luke 8 with the parable of the sower.

The Old Testament speaks of the “Promised Land” many times. We have been taught that this is a picture of God's coming kingdom, but it is more than this. Jesus said “the kingdom of God is within us.” So, the “Promised Land” is also pointing at our hearts and the life we are living now. The Promised Land represents all the goodness of God that we enjoy - past, present and future. It represents a place where we bear fruit. We should be thankful for the temporal things He has provided for us, such as food, clothing, houses, a good job and so forth. These are only temporal; a new heart and new life are eternal. We are to enjoy the goodness of God not only in our own selves but also in each other, like patience and kindness. This is why Jesus said

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” We are to enjoy the righteousness and love found in the Church of God with Jesus Christ as the head. The Holy Spirit will produce this fruit in us if we will allow Him to do so.

Now, the time of the first harvest was shortly after the Feast of Unleavened bread. The farmer was to bring a bundle of grain from his crops to the priest, even though it had not ripened yet, and wave it before the Lord to acknowledge the goodness of God for His blessings now and to come. We also can see the change in our selves and that there is more to come and we are also to rejoice before God. They were to count fifty days from the day they cut that first grain and bring a “...new meal offering” on that fiftieth day, according to Leviticus 23:16. This was the start of the Feast of Firstfruits. They were not to partake of any of their harvest until a lamb and a meal offering of flour and oil were brought. This command was to show us to prefer others before our selves. Even though it was a burnt offering, part of it was to be given to the priest. On the fiftieth day was something different - “...a new meal offering”, Leviticus 23:16. Two loaves of leavened bread were to be brought to the priest. No portion of the loaf was to be burned on the altar; all was to be given to the priest. The bread was to be prepared in the home of the giver. What this represents is walking in the light. Do you remember Paul's prayer - “...be fruitful in every good work.”? It was not only the harvesting of the grain they were to celebrate. They were also to take the grain, make something with it and give it to someone. We are to do the same. God wants others to enjoy the fruit He has made in us. He wants us to do something good for someone else so that they experience the love and patience and kindness He has produced in us. If we don't do any good works it is like growing an apple tree and not letting anyone eat the apples. After all, Ephesians 2 tells us, “We were created for good works.”

We are told in Deuteronomy 16:11 that these offerings were not only for the Levites, “You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who *is* within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* among you, at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.” We have Acts 2 for an example for this, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided

them among all, as anyone had need.”

There is something else concerning the two loaves worth mentioning. These loaves also represented both Jew and Gentile. In the book of Acts we see the Holy Spirit bringing forth the first fruits of the Jews and soon after the Gentiles. With the Feast of Firstfruits and Pentecost God wanted to reveal what He was and is doing with Israel and with the nations. He began to show Peter in Acts 10:15- “And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” Then He sent Peter to Cornelius, a Gentile. At the time of Pentecost 2000 years ago, God brought together both Jew and Gentile into “one bread and one body” as spoken of in 1Corinthians 10:17 and Ephesians 2:12-22. Historically we see the Passover, Feasts of Unleavened bread and Firstfruits accomplished. However, we have not yet seen the realization of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the fall. It started on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and it lasted seven days just like the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Again, this feast was to celebrate all the goodness of God for the fall harvest. Both of these feasts lasted seven days telling us to be without sin seven days a week and that we should also bear fruit every day of the week. One is the beginning of our faith the other represents those who have grown and matured like a tree that bears much fruit from year to year. Deuteronomy 16 tells us they were not to appear at any of these feasts empty handed. Unleavened Bread is all about faith and repentance. Firstfruits and Tabernacles are all about adding works and fruit to your faith. These are what the believer is to bring, faith and works. Remember, the farmer was to bring the fruit of his labor. We see this theme all throughout the scriptures. For example, Cain and Abel both brought the fruit of their labor to God as an offering. Abel was accepted but Cain was not because of a sinful heart, 1 John 4. God did not tell Cain to bring a blood offering. He told Cain to overcome his sin. In the New Testament we see the fulfillment of all these sacrifices and burnt offerings in Jesus Christ. Romans 12 also teaches us that we also are to fulfill these shadows and types. We are called “living sacrifices, holy

and acceptable to God.” Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” The Passover and Feast of Unleavened bread represent this initial faith. Then, 2 Peter 1:3-8 tells us to “add to our faith” knowledge and the fruit of the Spirit which is love. So, we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. Paul called the gifts given to him in Philippians 4:18, “a sweet smell, well pleasing to God.” This is referring to the burnt offering in Leviticus 1, “a sweet smell.” So, faith **and** works are pleasing to God. We also see in Hebrews 13:15, 16 that “praise, thanksgiving, doing good and fellowship” are pleasing to God. The Feast of Tabernacles represents the believer doing these things found in Hebrews 13 every day. This is being born again by His word, (1 Peter 1:23), then growing up to be mature sons and daughters. Sons of Abraham do what they believe.

Now, the commands concerning the Feast of Firstfruits are not clear as to how many days the feast was to be celebrated, nor did it give an exact day when to start the feast. We know it was fifty days after the farmer harvested his wave offering. That could differ from year to year depending on climate or when you planted. As said before, this represents our walk with God. He gives us time to mature and grow. Since everyone is different, some grow faster and some slower. Some will grow more, some less. One thing is sure: God does expect some growth soon. After all, the feast was just a short time after Passover, and it is written “none shall appear before the Lord empty.” Because every person's faith and growth is different, God says in Deuteronomy 16:17, “Every man shall bring as he is able.”

The Feast of Firstfruits represents the Christian who is growing in the Lord. This is a time of learning and chastisement. It is a time of growing in faith and putting off the old and putting on the new. There will be seasons of growth and watering, seasons for pruning and fertilizing, and seasons for just rest and rejuvenation. The Feast of Tabernacles represents maturity. This standard of maturity can only be achieved with a group of people. The church is God's design to reveal His love to the world with Jesus Christ as the head of the church. He already laid down his life and He desires and expects us to do the same (John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16). After all, where the head decides to go, the body follows. To lay our lives down for one another is the fruit, works, and faith that the feasts are pointing to.

Do you remember Ephesians 2:10 - “...we are created ... for

good works”? Just as an apple tree was created to grow and produce apples to be picked and enjoyed (not just to be looked at, but to be eaten), God created us to grow the fruit of the Spirit and to share and enjoy that fruit through good works. How would anybody know your kindness unless you did something to show them? You could tell them you’re kind and say some kind words. Words are good, but God also exhorts us to do: “My little children, let us not love in word or tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18).

The Feast of Tabernacles also speaks of dwelling in tents. The Israelites were to dwell in tents for the entire week in remembrance of the children of Israel coming out of Egypt because they were strangers in the land. This is a type of the believer being called out of the world and living as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth”(Hebrews 11:13), not calling it our own. We are to be like Abraham and others of like faith desiring a “city...whose builder and maker is God”(Hebrews 11:8-16). It is a city we have only seen in our minds, what the Holy Spirit has revealed to us. Jesus exhorted us to “lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven” and not to seek what the “nations seek after”; we are to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:19-34). Paul also exhorts us to “set your desires on things above and not on the things of the Earth” (Colossians 3:2). Abraham is called the father of our faith, and like him we should forsake the things of this world. That sounds like something Jesus said in Matthew 19:29 referring to an inheritance in His coming kingdom.

What we see in these three feasts is a progression in the life of the believer. First they come to God in faith and repentance. Then God begins to develop their character so the person begins to bear fruit. The child of God starts doing good like his Father in heaven (Luke 6:35, 36). At first the process could be fast or slow depending on the person. As they grow, more fruit develops with more works because he is being conformed to the image of the Father. Jesus, as a mature son, said, “my Father works and I work” (John 5:17).

We also see in the feasts what God is doing with the local body, His church. A group of people are called out of the world just as a group was called out of Egypt. The body of believers begins to learn, to grow, and to bring fruit to each other and to God. Ephesians 4 speaks of growing to “a mature man.” Hebrews 6 tells us “this we will do if God permits.” So, the local body may not grow to maturity. We

are told in Luke 12:48, “to whom much is given, much is required.” God, through his mercy, only allows us to grow as much as He knows we will live up to. In this way a greater judgment does not come upon us. The epistles give us many examples of the different maturity levels of different churches. We also see in Revelation the Lord exhorting His churches. We have to live what we believe.

Last of all we see in the feasts what God has done, is doing, and will do in the earth. The Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks and Pentecost have already been accomplished 2000 years ago. All that is left is Tabernacles. The Feast of Trumpets was to precede Tabernacles. The book of Revelation speaks of seven trumpets being sounded. This is to announce to the saints that the great feast is coming and Paul tells us that we will be caught up at the last trumpet (1Thessalonians 4:16, 17). God and His people will celebrate the fruit that the earth brings forth in that last day. When Jesus told His disciples to, “look, for the fields are ready for harvest and the workers are few,” He was pointing to the coming events after His resurrection. He was referring to the fruit of the Spirit in His people and workers are needed to help develop that fruit. Those firstfruits were brought forth at Pentecost and those many years after in the surrounding nations, with the Apostles and other chosen ones as the workers. God is working and will work to bring change in the hearts of His people. This is the new creation, and it will continue. The Feast of Tabernacles will be celebrated all through the millennium as the nations also bring their offerings (Zechariah 12:16; Revelation 21:24).

Brothers and sisters, this is why the Scriptures so strongly recommend that we become “fruitful in every good work” (Colossians 1:10) so that we have an abundant entrance into the kingdom (2 Peter 1:11). This is the “prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” that Paul talks about in Philippians 3:14. We must be “diligent to make our calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). God has revealed His will through the feasts. We only need to believe and do his will.