

Lesson Two – The Spring Feasts

The Feasts Of Israel

The first “feast of the Lord” is *Passover*.

Lev 23:5 - In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover.

Passover is the foundational feast. The other six feasts that follow are built upon it. Passover occurs in the spring of the year, on the 14th day of the Hebrew month, Nisan (March/April). In the same way that many colleges have academic years and businesses have fiscal years, Passover commences the RELIGIOUS year for Israel.

While the Jewish people have celebrated the Passover annually since the time of Moses, in reality, there was only ONE Passover. It occurred almost 3,500 years ago in Egypt. It was there, at that time that a lamb was sacrificed and the blood was applied to each doorpost and lintel. When this was done in faith and in obedience to God's command, that home was “passed over,” and the life of the firstborn was spared. All subsequent observances over the centuries have been memorials of that one and only first Passover. In the same way, there was only one occasion when the Messiah's flesh was pierced and His blood spilled on the cross of Calvary for the sin of the world. The Lord's Supper is an ongoing memorial of that one momentous occasion.

1 Cor 5:7-8 - Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Cor 11:24-26 - And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come

The Events of the First Passover

The story of the Exodus is one of the most dramatic and breathtaking accounts in all of Scripture. The children were enslaved in Egypt. Pharaoh was a harsh taskmaster. The lot of the Hebrews seemed hopeless. It was at that hour of history that God spoke to Moses from within a burning bush. It was a desert area – the bush was dry and sapless. Everything normal and natural argued for the speedy consumption of that thorn bush. The bush was burned and not consumed. Not without reason, Moses turned aside to see this unusual sight. From the midst of that burning bush, God would speak to His servant and declare that Moses would lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage

Exod 3:2-4 - And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

That bush typified Israel. Through the centuries, she would experience the hot flames of satanic fury, often manifested in the form of vehement anti-Semitism – she would burn, but she would not be consumed. And as God spoke to Moses from the midst of the burning bush, He has spoken to the world amidst the fiery trials of Israel. She alone was the depository of God's word to man. When holy men of God spoke as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit, they were JEWISH MEN.

God would tell Moses that He had seen the affliction of His people down in Egypt, that He had heard their cry for help, and that He knew their sorrows. And now, He was bringing a deliverer to bring them out of Egyptian bondage and bring them into a Promised Land. He was bringing them out to bring them in. Praise the Lord. Some 2,000 years ago, Jesus came to earth to bring man out of his bondage and with a mighty hand brought us out of Satan's grasp into the Promised Land of the Holy Ghost. There are still giants in the land, but the Lord has given us the victory.

Exodus 3:7-8 - And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

I'm reminded of the little chorus we used to sing in our church in Florida in the late 80s.

We shall go up unto the land and take the country; We shall possess the land from Jordan to the sea; Though the giants may be there our way to hinder; Our God has given us the victory!!!

God sent Moses to bring the nation out of bondage. At that moment, the Hebrews were a motley group of unorganized and uneducated slaves. They knew nothing on nationhood yet – that would happen at Mt. Sinai. They carried about, under their nails and in the hair, the mud of the slime pits of Egypt. This was nothing more but a group of slaves who through the years had basically forgotten their God. Lesser gods, gods created by men's minds and fashioned by men's hands from wood and stone, would have passed them by. The sons of Jacob had not been faithful to their God.

Despite their unfaithfulness, God had made a promise to Abraham. He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He had told them their seed would be as the sand of the seashore and as the stars of heaven. This was a solemn promise. God is a covenant-keeping God. What His mouth speaks, His right arm of power performs. Despite the outward appearance, they were still His people. He was aware of their affliction, and by His reckoning, it was time for them to “pack their bags” and head from home. After 430 years in slavery, God performed His word and made good on the promise. Glory

The Eternal God At Work

When Moses went to Egypt, he was not met with open arms and a nice Pharaoh. Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to let God’s people go. And then, plague after plague was unleashed with deadly accuracy against the idolatrous land of Egypt. With each plague, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart even more. Each of the plagues were directed against an Egyptian deity, until, at last, the firstborn of each home in Egypt would perish where a lamb was not slain and the blood was not applied. The plague reached even to the palace of Pharaoh himself. Since the pharaoh of Egypt was worshipped as a god, a god’s son would die. Finally, in desperation, Pharaoh consented to let the children of Israel go. Under Moses, the servant of the Lord, it is estimated that more than a million slaves, with all their possessions, marched past the Sphinx of Egypt into the desert. What a scene! A million emancipated slaves marching off into the desert. Unlike most ancient cities, there was no great wall surrounding the nation of Egypt. None was necessary. The inhospitable desert provided the best protection. And here were the Hebrews, walking right into it – men, women, children and livestock. Water, food, clothing and shelter from where would these necessities come???? Glory to God. You know the answer. The Lord God Jehovah. As David wrote in the Psalm, “can God provide a table in the wilderness?” The answer is YES!

Ps 78:19 - Yea, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

They knew very little of where they were going, or how they would get there. However, Moses knew the ONE who was leading them. They would cross the Red Sea; they would wander in the wilderness for forty years, and ultimately, under Joshua, enter the Promised Land.

Of the man words that would best describe what happened in Egypt 3500 years ago – one word says it best – REDEMPTION. The events were real, the miracles genuine – all wrought by the God of the Hebrews, who was greater than all the gods of Egypt. A group of slaves were redeemed so they could worship the true and living God. But such redemption was not without cost. Blood was to be shed to secure their redemption. The blood of a lamb; a Passover Lamb, were needed. All of those lambs sacrificed down in Egypt (one per household) pointed

to the one true Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul draws the parallel for all time when he says, “Christ, our Passover Lamb, was sacrificed for us.” (1 Cor. 5:7)

John 1:28-29 - These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

God appointed another feast that was to begin the very next day after Passover, on the fifteenth of the Hebrew month, Nissan. It is called the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*. It was to last for seven days. On the first night, and again on the seventh, there was to be a time of meeting (convocation) between God and man. Passover and Unleavened Bread are very intimately related. With the passing of time, these two feasts have been observed as one holiday by the Jewish people.

We will discuss the actual events surrounding this feast in a Jewish home, but usually the woman of the house goes throughout the house sprinkling bread-crumbs (leaven/yeast) at difficult-to-get-at places in literally every room in the house. Then, armed with only a broom and a dustpan, she would march through the house sweeping the leaven (which she herself had scattered throughout the house) into the kitchen. She would then sweep the crumbs into the dustpan, take it out of the house, and burn it. Even today, in observant of Jewish homes throughout the world, this ancient custom is still observed.

Leaven, in the Bible, always symbolizes evil or error. It is the agent that causes fermentation. The Lord said to his disciples. “Beware of the leaven (erroneous doctrine) of the Pharisees.” Paul warned the church of Corinth in a context of unjudged sin in their midst, that a “little leaven (yeast) leavens (ferments) the whole lump.” Left undealt with, sin will permeate and infect everything.

1 Cor 5:6-13 - Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortionists, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judges. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

Matt 16:6-12 - Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up. Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spoke it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

The Messiah was crucified on Passover. For His Roman executioners, the Jewish holy day was no barrier to carrying out their dastardly task. He was then taken from the cross and, in keeping with Jewish custom, buried as soon as possible. His body was placed in a borrowed tomb – the tomb of Joseph of Arimethea. But, unlike other corpses, His body would not decay in the grave. There would be no decomposition of the flesh. His body would be exempted from the divine pronouncement that from the dust of the ground man came and to the dust shall he return. David through the Holy Spirit prophesied the words of Messiah Jesus to His Father in Psalms 16:10 and it was repeated in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost.

Ps. 16:10 - For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Acts 2:27-31 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shall make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

Passover speaks of Calvary. The feast of Unleavened Bread proclaims that His physical body would not experience the ravages of death while in the grave. This is fulfilled in the fact He lived a sinless life without leaven in it. It's through HIS BODY we are healed of our diseases brought on by the curse of sin. We must discern the Lord's Body. It is in the Body of Christ that we are made whole. We as the church are called the Body of Christ because we are to represent the wholeness of Jesus. Paul wrote that the Lord has ordained us not to be divided. Each body part needs the other. Unity is birthed not by following the same doctrines but being connected to the same Head!

It is the job of the Holy Spirit to purge out the leaven in us. When we refuse to hear His voice and rebel against this purging, we are usually on the road to backsliding. When we listen, obey, repent and let Him cleanse us through

the blood of the Lord Jesus, we are on the road to eternal life. Chastisement is never easy. But it's the way of sons, not bastards.

The Feast of Firstfruits

The third feast occurs on the SECOND day of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is called the FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS. Passover occurs on the 14th, Unleavened Bread occurs on the 15th (and lasts till the 22nd); and "Firstfruits" by Jewish reckoning, occurs on the 16th day of the Hebrew month, Nisan.

The barley harvest – the first crop planted in the winter – is now, in the spring, beginning to ripen. The first sheaf (Firstfruits) of the harvest is cut and, in a carefully prescribed and meticulous ceremony, presented to the Lord. The Lord's acceptance of the Firstfruits is an "earnest," or pledge, on His part of a full harvest. As to the significance of the Feast of Firstfruits, as with the other feasts, there is no room for doubt or speculation.

A major doctrinal error crept into the church at Corinth after the resurrection of Jesus. It was called "gnosticism." Among other things, this philosophy held that the material universe was inherently evil. Consequently, if men rose physically from the grave, according to gnosticism, the result would be an evil body. Because of this teaching, some within the Church were beginning to deny the concept of physical resurrection. They believed in the immortality of the soul, but not in the resurrection of the body. To reject this was to reject the resurrection of Christ. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians that this was not the case. Logically, you can't have the latter without the former.

1 Cor 15:12-20 - Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Paul lists four negatives that will take place if what he had preached to them concerning the resurrection of Jesus was not true. To deny the resurrection of Messiah was to call Paul a liar, for it was he who had taught them that Messiah rose BODILY from the grave.

1 Cor 15:1-11 - Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

To deny the resurrection of Messiah was to repudiate their faith.

1 Cor 15:13-14 - But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

To deny the resurrection of Messiah was to consign men to misery.

1 Cor 15:17-19 - And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Through irresistible logic Paul brought those denying bodily resurrection down to the depths of despair based on their own reasoning. The Corinthians thesis was this: There is no bodily resurrection Paul's valid conclusion was: Then Messiah is not raised. The consequence of their thesis if correct: Paul was a liar, their faith was in vain, they were still in their sins, their loved ones who died in the Lord had perished, and they were of all men most miserable. Happily their thesis is NOT CORRECT.

Paul's Defense of the Resurrection

Paul wrote in defending the faith two words that corrected this false doctrine that had crept into the church at Corinth – BUT NOW!

1 Cor 15:20 - But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept.

Paul used this expression BUT NOW no less than 18 times in the New Testament. When he did so, he often used it an equivalent to the military terms, "About face!" or "To the rear, March!" He was saying, "Turn around one hundred eighty degrees." <1 Cor. 12:18, 20; 15:20; 2 Cor. 8:22; 12:6; Gal. 4:9; Eph. 2:13; 5:8; Phil. 2:12; Col. 1:26; 3:8; 2 Tim 1:10; Phile. 11; Heb. 2:8; 8:6; 9:26; 11:16; 12:26>

To the Ephesians – you were once strangers and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel – BUT NOW the blood makes you nigh.

To the Philippians – you obeyed in my presence – BUT NOW obey outside my presence and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

To the Ephesians – you once walked in darkness BUT NOW you are LIGHT in the Lord.

To the Corinthians – you once were drowning in hopelessness and despair, BUT NOW is CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD!...Glory to God!

The Barley Harvest

When Paul wrote this, he had in mind the Firstfruits (or sheaf). When God accepted the Firstfruits, they became an earnest or guarantee that the rest of the crop would be harvested. Christ himself is the Firstfruits. In both the Old and New Testament, people were raised from the dead. In time however, they die again. Jesus was the first to be resurrected from the grave NEVER TO DIE AGAIN. He alone is the first fruit.

Lev 23:9-10 - And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the Firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:

The Passover spoke of Messiah's death as a sacrificial and substitutionary lamb.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of His sinless life and perfect body that would not and did not decay in the grave.

The Feast of Firstfruits proclaims that death could not hold her Foe. "Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes."

The Feast of Weeks

The fourth feast is known as Shavuot (Hebrew) or "Weeks." It is called the Feast of Weeks because God specifically told the sons of Jacob that they

were to count seven weeks from Firstfruits, and then on the day after this fourth feast was to be observed

Lev 23:15-16 - And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD

Seven weeks are 49 days. Add one day (“the day after”), and it brings the total to fifty days. This fourth feast was to occur precisely fifty days after Firstfruits (Messiah’s resurrection). This feast is also called “PENTECOST” which means “fiftieth.”

Deut 16:9-10 - Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou begin to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

Acts 2:1 - And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

On this occasion, the children of Israel were not simply to bring the Firstfruits of the wheat harvest to the Temple (as they brought the Firstfruits of the barley harvest at the Feast of Firstfruits), but two loaves of bread. These two loaves of bread were to be baked with fine flour and leaven.

Fifty days, two loaves, and leaven – what did it all mean? In short, it all pointed to the Holy Ghost and the event in Acts when Jesus sent back the Spirit to birth the New Testament church and begin the New Covenant. A covenant no longer based on law written in black and white ink, but law written by the finger of God in the hearts of the believers in Jesus. Jesus arose from the grave on the day of Firstfruits. He then spent 40 days with His disciples in post resurrection ministry.

Acts 1:2-3 - Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

He informed them it was necessary that He ascend to His Father (there to apply the benefits of His once-for-all sacrifice), but that He would not abandon them. He would send them His Holy Spirit who would come alongside to help in His absence.

John 14:16-17 - And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

They were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem until He came. They waited as they were commanded. Their wait was not long – only 10 days. And then it happened: the Spirit of God descended on those first-century believers. For the Feast of Weeks, the two loaves were to be brought to the Temple. They represented the Jew and Gentile, now ONE in the MESSIAH with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said:

Eph 2:14-16 - For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Leaven In the Loaves

For this feast, unlike the feast of Unleavened Bread, there was to be leaven in the loaves. The believers were not yet glorified, even though they had been saved, sanctified and justified through the blood of the Lord Jesus. Positionally, the church is PERFECT in the MESSIAH. Practically and conditionally, she still has a long way to go. Messiah, the head is unleavened. The Church, the body, still has leaven within her. Therefore, the leaven was to be included in these loaves.

We will get into further discussion about the loaves in the lesson on Pentecost. The priest would take the loaves of bread and wave those loaves toward the fire of the brazen altar. The fire of the brazen altar is Calvary. The only remedy for the leaven in the church is the cross. We must die out to ourselves and allow the FIRE of the Holy Ghost to purge out the leaven in us. Sadly, much of the preaching of the cross has gone by the wayside. The HOLY GHOST ALWAYS POINTS THE CHURCH BACK TO CALVARY!!!!!!!!!!!!!! The Feast of Weeks was based on a schedule of 50 days AFTER PASSOVER. Passover was the key. The cross is the key.

SUMMARY AND FULFILLMENT OF THE SPRING FEASTS

- **PASSOVER** – speaks of redemption. Messiah, the Passover Lamb, has been slain for us
- **UNLEAVENED BREAD** speaks of sanctification. He was set apart. His body would not decay in the grave.

- **FIRSTFRUITS** – speaks of resurrection or glorification. Death could not hold her Foe. On the third day, Jesus rose triumphantly from the grave.
- **THE FEAST OF WEEKS, or PENTECOST** – speaks of origination. The coming of the Holy Ghost inaugurated the New Covenant and Church Age which the Messiah instituted in His commands to the 12 in the upper room the night he was betrayed and crucified. The middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down. From the two, the Lord is calling out the Church, which is HIS BODY.