

The Feasts of Israel: Their Meaning  
Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.  
An introduction

Today we begin this week a study that should carry us into the Advent Season. It will focus on the seven great festivals in Israel, as well as carrying them into first century to explain how, in the greater revelation of God, they were interpreted. I can only imagine the experience of a Jewish believer when the Bible of their heritage and the customs they observed in Judaism takes on far greater meaning and understanding that is reveal by seeing them as anticipation of the advent of the Messiah. Let's begin by rehearsing some things we already know from our study of Holy Scripture.

1. The origin of all that is seen.

“...from (origin) Him, and through (continuance) Him, and  
to Him (goal) are all things. To  
Him be the glory (purpose) forever (duration). Amen (Rom. 11:36)

2. The Bible reveals to us several things: first, it explains that God's actions and purposes of self-glorification will not fail “even though this world with devils filled threatens to undo us” to quote Luther's great hymn. Second, the Bible describes for us God's own means, for only He could do so, to bring this to fruition in the promise of a redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Third, God gave us the Bible so that we could stand in awe at the incomprehensible wonder of God's plan. Let us think about the content and structure of the greatest of all books, the only one authored by the infinite God.
  - a. The Bible is structured in two parts, an Old Testament, or the Hebrew Scriptures, and the New Testament, the Greek Scriptures.
  - b. The Bible begins in a garden and ends in a recreated (city) garden (Gen. 1-2, Rev. 21-22).
  - c. The Bible progressively and incrementally discloses the purposes of God. The Old Testament is a book of anticipations of the one who is to come; the New Testament tells us that he has come and will come once again. Point:

what is enfolded in the OT is unfolded in the NT. This becomes evident in how the New Testament writers quoted the prophets arguing that what they had spoken is being fulfilled in Jesus. While the prophets often spoke of a glorious future day, the writers of the New Testament quote them over 283 times stating that it was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus or in a yet-future kingdom through Jesus.

“And we so have the prophetic word made more sure  
(the context being the coming of Jesus), to which  
you do well to pay attention as to a lamp  
in a dark place...” (II Pet. 1:19).

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers  
in the prophets in many portions and in many ways  
in these last days has spoken to us in His son” (Heb. 1:1a).

### **The Meaning of Universal History: God's Glory Revealed, Redemption Accomplished**

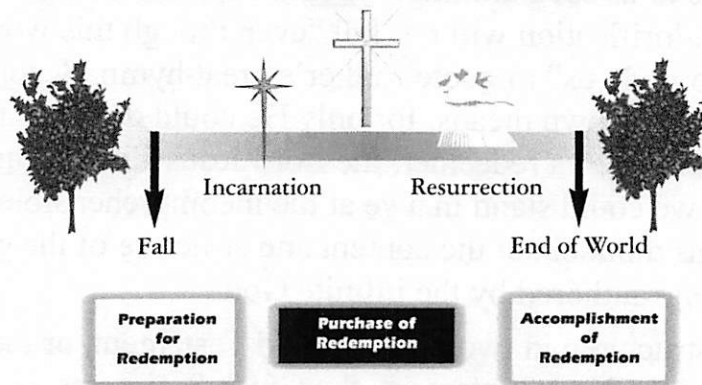


Chart 2

3. The central promise of restoration in the Bible is the one God made to Abraham (Gen. 12; 15, 17). In Genesis 3:15, the promise of salvation for God's

- a. Passover (Pesach): This feast occurs on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (March/ April). It celebrates a past deliverance from bondage and looks forward to a greater deliverance. It is celebrated in families on Fridays,
- b. Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi): This feast begins the night after Passover and lasts a week. Leaven, being a symbol of sin, is removed from homes and only unleavened bread is eaten and looks forward to the removal of the curse.
- c. First Fruits (Reshit Katiz): This feast is celebrated on the morning after Saturday, Sabbath, meaning on Sunday. The Christian Church sees First Fruits fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus.
- d. The Feast of Week (Shavu'ot): This comes fifty days or seven weeks after Passover to celebrate the blessing of the ingathering of the wheat harvest. This we see as a greater ingathering, Acts 2, Pentecost (the word means fifty).

We will add a feast here that is not one of the seven here:

Purim This festival celebrates the miraculous deliverance of God's people in captivity during the Persian Period through Esther and Mordecai. It occurs in February/March. It anticipates rest from Israel's enemies.

#### In the Fall:

- e. Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah): This festival takes place in September/October; it is a single-day event. It marks the end of harvest labor, suggesting the coming of a final rest for the people of God.
- f. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): Ten days after Trumpets is this highest of festivals. It is traditionally a day of sacrifices, confession of sin, and national cleansing. For us, it anticipates our final redemption, the absolute removal of the effects of Adamic blight, meaning physical death.
- g. Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot): Five days after Yom Kippur is a week-long celebration called the Feast of Booths of Tabernacles. It speaks in anticipation of the protective presence of the Lord over His people.

We will add a feast here another that is not one of the seven here:

The Feast of Lights (Hanukkah): This feast celebrates the deliverance from the Syrians with the cleansing of the Temple after the desecration of Antiochus Epiphanes in the Maccabean Revolt of 168-165.

# The Seven Feasts of the Lord

'These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.' Col 2:17



## The Spring Feasts (fulfilled @ Jesus' first coming)

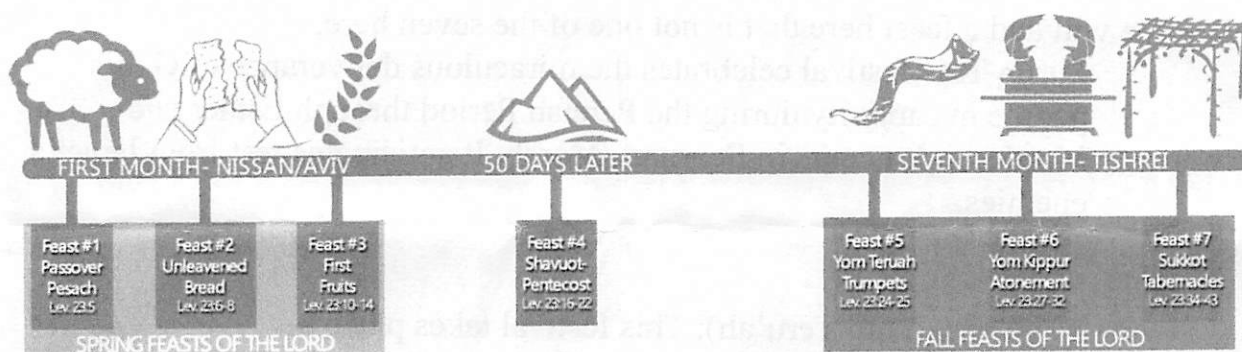
Passover	Unleavened Bread	FirstFruits	Pentecost
Crucifixion Of Jesus	Burial Of Jesus	Resurrection Of Jesus	Coming of the Holy Spirit
Nisan 14	Nisan 15-22	Nisan 17	Sivan 7
Exodus 12 Matt 26:17-27	Lev 23:6-8 I Cor 5:7-8	Lev 23:9-14 I Cor 15:20-23	Lev 23:15-22 Acts 1 & 2

## The Autumn (Fall) Feasts (fulfilled @ Jesus' second coming)

Trumpets	Atonement	Tabernacles
Rapture & Resurrection Of Believers	Second Coming Of Jesus	Messianic Kingdom Age
Tishri 1	Tishri 10	Tishri 15-22
Lev 23:23-25 I Cor 15:51-52	Lev 23:26-32 Matt 24:29-30	Lev 23:33-44 Rev 20:1-6

Feast Gap Period (fulfilled by Church Age)

'The Days of Awe'  
Time of Jacob's trouble



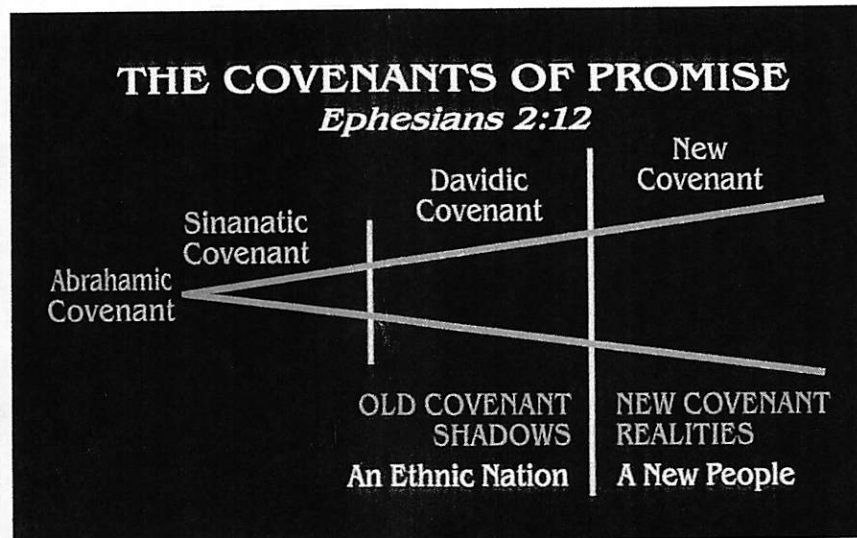
### Applications:

1. When I hold in my hands the Bible several emotions and thoughts seem to overwhelm me. I am holding in my hand the most amazing of all books; it is the very Word of God. For some unexplainable reason only found in the incomprehensible grace of God, He allowed me to be born into a circumstance and the efforts of countless people, some known, most not, to have this one-of-a-kind volume. I can only cry out to God, "O the grace of salvation's plan; O the love that brought it down to man. O the mighty gulf that God did span...." Words are beyond describing the precious worth of this book!
2. The preciousness of this book is not in its the words and structure, but the message. The message is about a person, a person who alone would accomplish the purposes in glorifying Himself (since a lesser cannot accomplish a greater than Himself, that person had to be God [this an established fact because all of God's conduct and requirements are an expression of His perfections]). Since the object through God's ultimate glorification of His person was through a

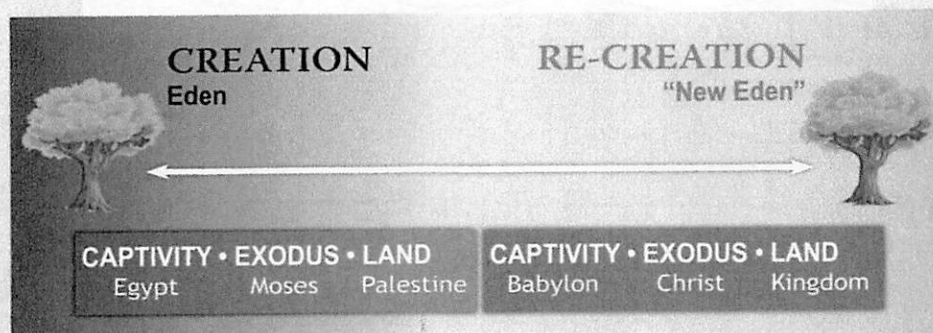
human (the perpetrator must be the judged), that person must be God to qualify to redeem and mankind because mankind required redemption. This is the only book designed by God to explain that to us. It reveals to us the only one who could redeem, a human/divine willing substitute!

3. This wonderful book tells His story. It does it in a linear, progressive manner with two great quantum leaps, the first and second appearances (one past and one yet to come). I want us to stand in awe of the wonder of the meticulous and accurate way that God does things. He is not affected by the lapse of time; His promises are sure. The invisible is more real, at times, than the visible.
4. My response to this amazing book is delight and heart-contentment in its author.
5. As we study the great festivals that God gave to Israel, we must remember that we were also given to us. The feasts point to what the people of Israel have generally missed. In ceremonies, ritual, and human examples the Old Testament point to Jesus. They looked for a political/military deliverer in time; the pointers are to one who in time is all those things and more, a suffering substitute/sovereign/ ruler for you and me.

people is given: a male child will crush the head of the serpent. The promise to Abraham was a pledge to bring deliverance to the world (John 3:16) through one of his descendants. Paul interpreted this Savior as Christ (Gal. 3:16). "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to his seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." This strongly suggests that the purpose of the Bible is recovery and redemption.



## The Panorama of Scripture



4. A description of the seven major feasts is found in Lev. 23.



5. The shadowed-fulfillment structure of the Bible can be illustrated by the meaning of Israel's festivals. The deepest meaning, the spiritual meaning, is found in the NT. The question then before us is this: How do the great feasts of Israel anticipate the person who is the centerpiece of all revelation?

### Preliminaries: Basic Facts in Summary

1. The feasts of Israel were connected to the solar, not lunar, calendar and that is why the dates vary yearly and are much related to an agrarian society, four in the Spring and three in the Fall.
2. Of the seven great feasts, three are also called Pilgrimage Feasts (Shalosh Regalim) because they require the appearance before God in Jerusalem (Passover, Weeks, and Day of Atonement [Deut. 16:1, 9-10, 13, 16-17]). After the destruction of the Second Temple, and until the construction of the third Temple, they are not required (pertinent texts are read in the synagogues).
3. What are the seven great festivals in the Old Testament?

In the Spring:

