

Festivals and Holy Days

In the Mosaic Law God gave the Israelites a calendar that was filled with festivals and holy days. The one that many modern Christians are familiar with is the Sabbath, but there are quite a few others as well. It's unfortunate that so many Christians are unfamiliar with these festivals. The holy days that God gave to Israel aren't just trivia. They all point to Christ's ministry *and* they have prophetic significance as well!

We can find a detailed list of these festivals in Leviticus 23:

Leviticus 23:1-2: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.”

The chapter goes on to list the various festivals. They are:

- **The Sabbath (1 day):** this occurred on the 7th day of each week. It was a holy day of rest (Lev. 23:1-3). This is the holy day that many people are most familiar with.
- **The Passover (1 day):** this occurred on the 14th day of the 1st month of the Jewish year. It reminded Israel that God delivered them from bondage in Egypt (Lev. 23:4-5).
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread (7 days):** this was a week-long event which started on the day after the Passover. This reminded Israel of their deliverance from bondage into a new, holy life (Lev. 23:6-8).
- **The Firstfruits (1 day):** this occurred on the day after the Sabbath that followed the Passover (which meant it always took place on a Sunday). It demonstrated that the

first and best of everything belonged to God (Lev. 23:9-14). This began the day after the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

- **The Pentecost (Feast of Weeks) (1 day):** this occurred 7 weeks (50 days) after the Festival of Firstfruits. In this holy day a priest would wave two loaves (which had been baked with leaven) before the Lord (Lev. 23:15-21).
- **The Trumpets (1 day):** this occurred on the 1st day of the 7th month. This was a day of rest and burnt offerings, and it symbolized new beginnings (Lev. 23:23-25). A gap of 4 months separated Pentecost from Trumpets.
- **The Day of Atonement (1 day):** this occurred on the 10th day of the 7th month. This was a day of rest, in which people cried out to the Lord for forgiveness (Lev. 23:28-32). This was the day the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and made atonement for the sins of the people.
- **The Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Booths) (7 days):** this was a week-long event that began on the 15th day of the 7th month. This reminded Israel of the ways God had blessed them in the past (Lev. 33-44).

These festivals give us an amazing overview of God's plan for history. Some people have called these festivals God's prophetic calendar.

Before we begin a detailed look at each holy day, there's an important question we need to answer. When the church age began there were some people who wondered if Christians were still bound by the old Levitical law. Was the church required to observe all of these festivals?

That question was answered by the apostle Paul in two different places:

Colossians 2:16-17: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a

holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.”

Romans 14:5-6: “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”

In the Old Testament the Israelites were under the Mosaic Law and they were required to observe these feasts (along with all the other provisions that were contained in the law). However, after the death of Jesus the old covenant was replaced by the new covenant. We are no longer under the Mosaic Law! Instead we're under grace (Romans 6:14). Christians are *not* required to observe these festivals. Instead we have the freedom to do as we think best. We can observe them or we can ignore them. The Bible commands Christians to not judge each other concerning this matter. Those who keep them aren't better than those who don't (and vice versa).

There's not enough time to explore each of these feasts in detail so I'll only cover them briefly. I hope this will give you a better understanding of the marvelous calendar that God gave to Israel.

The Sabbath

The first holy day that's mentioned in Leviticus 23 is the Sabbath. It was to be held on the 7th day of every week:

Leviticus 23:3: “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, a holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”

The Lord set apart the 7th day of the week (which is our Saturday) as a holy day of rest. No work was allowed to be done on the Sabbath *on pain of death*. In Numbers 15:32-36 we're told that a man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. When he was brought to the Lord for sentencing God commanded that he be stoned to death. This was done in obedience to this commandment:

Exodus 30:14-15: “Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.”

Twice in two verses the Lord commanded that anyone who violated the Sabbath was to be put to death. The Lord didn't permit violations of the Sabbath (although Christ pointed out that showing love and kindness on the Sabbath wasn't a violation of the law). God often used His prophets to rebuke Israel for the many ways they violated this command.

The Lord gave several reasons for this holy day. First, when He created the world in 6 days and rested on the 7th day¹ He

1 It's worth noting that God clearly states that He created the world in six days. The word that's translated “day” in Exodus 20 is the same word that's used in Genesis 1. God couldn't have made it any plainer that He created everything in six ordinary days. After all, the Lord commanded the Israelites to rest on the 7th day just as He did! Those who claim that those days lasted millions of years turn Exodus 20:11 into nonsense. Are people

made that day holy:

Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

We are also told that the 7th day of the week was set aside so that mankind might be refreshed from their labors:

Exodus 23:12: “Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.”

Finally, the Sabbath was set aside to remind the nation of Israel of their special relationship with God:

Exodus 23:13: “Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.”

Besides the Sabbath day, the Lord also appointed Sabbath years and the Year of Jubilee. Every 7th year was to be a year of rest. In that year the Israelites weren't allowed to sow crops. Instead the land was to lie dormant to give it a chance to rest. The Lord promised to provide an abundant harvest on the year before the Sabbath year so that famine wouldn't ensue. Likewise, every 50th year was the Year of Jubilee. The land was to lie rest during that year and all debts were canceled. Since the Year of Jubilee

supposed to work for millions of years and then rest for millions of years? If God had wanted to say that the world was created through millions of years of evolution He certainly could have done so – but He didn't.

always followed a Sabbath year, the Lord promised to provide an abundant harvest before those two years of rest. (You can read more about this in Leviticus 25.)

The Sabbath is one of the festivals that haven't been fulfilled yet. We know this because the book of Hebrews tells us about it:

Hebrews 4:4-11: “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

In this life we labor and work for God. However a day is coming when we will finally cease from our labors and enter into God's rest. The people of God have struggled for a long time but one day Christ will return for us. When that day comes the church will finally rest from its labors. Our Sabbath day of rest is approaching! Every day it draws nearer.

The Passover

The second holy day that's on the Levitical calendar is the Passover. It was to be celebrated on the 14th day of the 1st month of the Jewish year:

Leviticus 23:5: “In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover.”

This festival began in the evening. Jewish days always began in the evening and then continued until the next afternoon. This followed the pattern that God established in Genesis 1: a day consisted of an evening and a morning.

The first time Israel celebrated the Passover was when they were still in bondage in Egypt:

Exodus 12:2-10: “And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of

the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance [internal organs] thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”

The Passover was to be celebrated at the beginning of every Jewish year. It served as a reminder of Israel's great deliverance from Egypt. The last plague that God sent to Egypt was the angel of death, who killed the firstborn of every living creature. In order to be saved from the angel of death the Jews had to be covered by the blood of a perfect lamb. All of the firstborn who weren't protected by the blood were killed by the angel. This points to Christ, who was “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The Lord is even called “Christ our passover” in 1 Corinthians 5:7, which makes the parallel even clearer!

The Jews celebrated the first Passover by killing the perfect male lamb in the evening. After they painted the doorposts of their house with its blood, they were to roast the lamb (including its internal organs) with fire, and then eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Nothing was allowed to remain until the next morning. If there were any leftovers they had to be burned.

The Passover looked forward to the coming Lamb of God – the Messiah who would die for our sins. As you might suspect, Jesus was actually crucified *on the day of the Passover*. The Passover festival was fulfilled by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross. He fulfilled it by personally becoming our sacrificial Lamb!

The blood of Christ is the only thing that can deliver us

from death. We must be washed in His blood:

John 6:53-58: “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise Him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so He that eateth me, even He shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever.”

No outsiders were permitted to eat of the Passover. Only those who were born into the family (or purchased) could eat it. Likewise, no one who's not in the family of God can partake of Christ.

I think this quote puts it well:

“The firstborn Jews in Egypt weren't saved from death by admiring the lamb, caring for the lamb, or loving the lamb. The lamb had to be slain, and the blood applied to the doorpost of each Jewish house. We aren't saved by Christ the Example or Christ the Teacher. We're saved by Christ the Substitute, who gave His life in our stead on the cross at the same hour the Passover lambs were being slain at the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.” (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy*, pg. 103-104)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a seven-day event that began the day after Passover. It's explained in this passage:

Leviticus 23:6-8: “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day is a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.”

This feast was celebrated while the Israelites were still in Egypt:

Exodus 12:15-20: “Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance forever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even.

Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.”

The feast could be summed up as follows:

- The feast lasted 7 days, during which the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread each day.
- The first and last day of the feast were holy days and no work could be done on them.
- The Israelites had to remove all leaven (which was symbolic of sin) from their homes.
- No one could eat anything that contained leaven during this feast. The punishment for breaking this was severe.
- “Offerings made by fire” were made during those 7 days.
- This feast served as a reminder of the day the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt.

There are two important points that we need to understand to make sense of this feast. First, leaven is symbolic of sin. Second, Jesus referred to Himself as the Bread of Life:

John 6:33: "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

John 6:50-51: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came

down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Since Jesus was without sin, and since He's also the Bread of Life, that makes Him *unleavened bread*. In this festival God commanded Israel to partake of unleavened bread – and Jesus commands us to partake of Him! This festival began the day after after the Passover, which means it took place the day after the sacrificial lamb had been killed. Just as Christ fulfilled the Passover by becoming the sacrificial lamb, Christ fulfilled this festival by *being* the unleavened bread. God commands us to partake of Him, and to remove the sin from our lives (which is what leaven symbolizes).

This is how the apostle Paul put it:

1 Corinthians 5:6-8: "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."

The Festival of Firstfruits

The Festival of the Firstfruits fell on the day after the Sabbath that followed the Passover. Since the Sabbath was always a Saturday, that meant this festival would always occur on a Sunday. The festival is described in this passage:

Leviticus 23:9-14: "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: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord. And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.”

In this festival the Jews were commanded to bring a portion of the firstfruits of their crops to the Lord as an offering. The priest would take this portion and wave it before the Lord. They would then offer a male lamb, without blemish, as a burnt offering. The offering was accompanied by a meat offering and a drink offering. (These offerings were offerings of *dedication*, not offerings for sin.)

The Israelites weren't allowed to eat “bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears” until they brought their firstfruits and offered them to the Lord. The Lord claimed the firstfruits of their crops as His own, and this was day they were required to offer it. Although the entire universe belongs to God, He only required the firstfruits and gave the rest of the harvest to the nation of Israel. The firstfruits were offered on behalf of the entire harvest.

The key to understanding this festival is to realize that

Christ rose from the dead on the very day this festival was being celebrated. That's not a coincidence! The Bible identifies Christ as the **firstfruit of the dead**:

1 Corinthians 15:20-23: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming."

This festival looked forward to the resurrection. Although there other people in the Bible were also raised from the dead, they weren't raised incorruptible and immortal and they eventually died again. Christ's resurrection, however, was different. He was raised in a new and more glorious body! Since Jesus was the first person to be resurrected He was the firstfruits. So far He's the only person who's been resurrected but one day the rest of the harvest will follow. Verse 23 tells us that when Christ returns the righteous dead will be resurrected and the living saints will be translated (which is an exciting thought).

Christ fulfilled the Passover by becoming the sacrificial lamb, and He fulfilled the Festival of Unleavened Bread by becoming the Bread of Life. Christ fulfilled this festival by raising from the dead and becoming the firstfruits of the dead.

Pentecost

The festival of Pentecost (which was also known as the Feast of Weeks) was a one-day holy day that took place 50 days after the Festival of Firstfruits. It's described in these verses:

Leviticus 23:15-21: "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. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the Lord. And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the Lord, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the Lord. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be a holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”

The festival of Pentecost took place 50 days after the festival of firstfruits. It was a one-day event and no work could be done on that day. The event involved a number of different sacrifices:

- A series of burnt offerings that consisted of 7 lambs, 1 young bullock, and 2 rams. Burnt offerings were offerings of dedication.
- A goat as a sin offering. Sin offerings were offerings of

reconciliation for sin against God.

- 2 lambs for peace offerings. Peace offerings dealt with thanksgiving and fellowship with God.

At the heart of this festival were the two wave loaves. These loaves were made of fine flour and were baked with yeast. This is very unusual because the other festivals (Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread) prohibited the use of yeast. In the Scriptures yeast always represents sin, and yet yeast was baked into these two loaves. The priest took these two loaves and waved them before the Lord.

The reason many Christians are familiar with the word Pentecost is because that's the day the church came into existence:

Acts 2:1-5: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

On that day the Holy Spirit came and united the Jews and the Gentiles (two very different groups) into one body. There was no longer Jew or Gentile for all were one in Christ! The two loaves had been joined together into one.

However, these loaves have not yet been made perfect. Just as there was leaven in the loaves, so there's sin in the visible church. When the Lord returns He will make us immortal and incorruptible, but that blessed day has not yet come. For now we still must deal with the sin that works throughout the church.

One of the key characteristics of leaven is that it makes

bread rise. Leaven doesn't actually make more bread, though. Instead it makes bread seem to be larger than it really is. Likewise, sin has made the church appear much larger than it actually is. There are many people in our midst who claim to be Christians but aren't. Those people will be separated out when the Lord returns for His church, and will be left behind.

Right after this festival is described there are two verses which seem out of place:

Leviticus 23:22: "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleaning of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I am the Lord your God."

Why was this commandment put right in the middle of a discussion of festivals and holy days? Well, it's interesting to note that because of this commandment Ruth was able to find food to feed herself and her mother-in-law. This led to her relationship with Boaz, who was an ancestor of King David, who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ – the one who made all of these festivals possible.

Christ fulfilled the Passover by becoming our sacrificial lamb. He fulfilled the Festival of Unleavened Bread by becoming the Bread of Life. He fulfilled the Festival of Firstfruits by rising from the dead. The Holy Spirit fulfilled Pentecost by joining both Jew and Gentile into the body of Christ. All of these festivals take place in the spring, and all of them have been fulfilled.

There are 3 festivals left. All of them occur in the fall and all of them remain unfulfilled. They are prophetic and look forward to events that have not yet come to pass.

The Festival of Trumpets

After Pentecost there's a gap of 4 months before the next

festival – but the 3 remaining festivals all occur within 15 days. The next holy day is the Festival of Trumpets, which was held on the 1st day of the 7th month. It's described in this passage:

Leviticus 23:23-25: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.”

This was a one-day festival and no work was allowed on that day. It was a day of rest and sacrifices – a day that was signified by the blowing of trumpets.

The sacrifices for this festival are described in this passage:

Numbers 29:1-5: “And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have a holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: **it is a day of blowing the trumpets** unto you. And ye shall offer a burnt offering for a sweet savor unto the Lord; one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year without blemish: And their meat offering shall be of flour mingled with oil, three tenth deals for a bullock, and two tenth deals for a ram, And one tenth deal for one lamb, throughout the seven lambs: And one kid of the goats for a sin offering, to make an atonement for you:”

Burnt offerings and meat offerings were offerings of dedication and *commitment*, not offerings for sin. They were a way of saying “I’m fully dedicating my life to serving God.”

This day was signified by blowing trumpets. There were

three times when priests were allowed to blow trumpets, and they're listed in Numbers 10:1-10. Priests could blow their trumpets to call the people together, to announce war, or to announce special times (such as the new moon). This festival seems to fall into the third category.

The Festival of Trumpets was held on the 1st day of the 7th month and ushered in the new civil year (“Rosh Hashanah”). Since it started the new civil year it marked a new beginning for the Israelites. As Christians we're also waiting for a new beginning, which will also be marked by the blowing of a trumpet:

1 Corinthians 15:51-54: “Behold, I show 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall 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 corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

If this festival is pointing to the rapture (which is a subject of debate among scholars) then its fulfillment is still in the future. One day the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised, and we will begin a new existence! Whenever this happens it will mark the beginning of a new life for us – just as Rosh Hashanah marked the beginning of a new civil year for Israel.

The Day of Atonement

This feast was a one-day event that occurred on the 10th day of the 7th month (which is 9 days after the Festival of

Trumpets). It's explained in this passage:

Leviticus 23:27-32: “Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

The Day of Atonement is a day that's set aside for fasting, praying, and confessing sin. On that day the congregation wasn't allowed to do any work (just as our works can't bring about our atonement). The people were commanded to spend their time “afflicting your souls” and crying out to God for forgiveness. On this day the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies in the temple and sprinkled the blood of the perfect sacrifice on the mercy seat, to make atonement for the sins of the people.

I believe this festival hasn't been fulfilled yet and is looking forward to the day when the entire nation of Israel will finally accept Jesus as their Messiah. This is spoken of in the book of Zechariah:

Zechariah 12:10-11: “And I will pour upon the

house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

At the end of the seven-year tribulation period the Jews will realize that they rejected their Messiah and will turn to God with great sorrow and repentance. That is when all Israel will be saved (which is what Paul discussed extensively in Romans 11).

The Feast of Tabernacles

This feast, also known as the “Feast of Booths”, occurred on the 15th day of the 7th month (which is 5 days after the Day of Atonement). This festival was a week-long event that dealt not with affliction but with joy:

Leviticus 23:34-36: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the first day shall be a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be a holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.”

Leviticus 23:39-43: “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

In this feast the Israelites were commanded to take branches from trees, build booths (or tents), and live in them for 7 days. The first and last of these days were considered Sabbaths. (In the Jewish calendar there were occasionally times when a day was designated as a “Sabbath” even though it didn't fall on the 7th day of the week.) During this time the Israelites were commanded to dwell in booths, rejoice in the Lord, and remember the time when their ancestors lived in tents after the Lord delivered them from Egypt. While the Day of Atonement was about mourning and repentance, the Feast of Tabernacles was about rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord. This holy day was like Thanksgiving, except it lasted for an entire week.

There were many sacrifices involved with this festival. A list can be found in Numbers 29. By the time the week was over 199 animals were sacrificed!

I find it interesting that during the Millennial Kingdom the Gentile nations will be required to go to Jerusalem and keep this

festival:

Zechariah 14:16-17: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.”

Even during the millennium the Lord still wants everyone to look back and remember the great things that He has done.

Scholars believe that this festival looks forward to the time when Jesus will return to this world to reign over it and live with His people. The Bible tells us that the millennium will be a time of tremendous peace and great rejoicing. When prophesying about that coming era the prophet Isaiah wrote this:

Isaiah 65:18-19: “But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.”

People will indeed rejoice before the Lord – not for just 7 days, but for a thousand years!

Conclusion

There are some festivals that have been fulfilled and there are some that haven't. The Passover was fulfilled when Jesus became our sacrificial Lamb and died on the cross. The Feast of

Unleavened Bread was fulfilled when Jesus led a sinless life and became the Bread of Life for us. The Festival of Firstfruits was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead and became the firstfruits of the resurrection. Pentecost was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit united the Jews and the Gentiles into one body, the church.

There are four festivals which haven't been fulfilled yet. We haven't entered into our Sabbath rest. Jesus hasn't yet returned for us at the sound of the trumpet. The nation of Israel hasn't repented of rejecting the Messiah or mourned for their sins. Finally, the age of the Millennial Kingdom is still in the future. The Festival of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Festival of Booths are still in the future – but one day they'll be fulfilled. One might say they're the next events on God's calendar.