

CHRIST IN THE FEASTS

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Introduction

Under the old covenant, Israel observed seven annual feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles (Lev. 23:4-44). Some feasts commemorated Israel's exodus from Egypt. Others marked agricultural seasons. Collectively, the feasts framed Israel's ritual year and were an important part of observing the law of Moses.

What can the feasts teach us today? Colossians and Hebrews tell us that the law was a shadow of spiritual reality in Christ (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:1). The first Christians saw Christ in the shadow of the feasts and recorded some of their interpretations in the New Testament. This booklet will examine Israel's feasts in light of Christ so that, with the Holy Spirit's help, we may know Jesus better (Eph. 1:17).

Passover

Judaism's annual cycle of feasts had its roots in Egypt's oppression of the Israelites. Prior to the exodus, the Hebrew people had been slaves for generations, and their suffering was severe. The Lord saw Israel's misery and had compassion on them (Ex. 3:7-9). But when God sent Moses to ask for Israel's release, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, refused (Ex. 5:2). God sent nine plagues to change Pharaoh's mind, giving him the opportunity to release Israel each time. But Pharaoh was unyielding. Then came Passover. For Israel, Passover was a stunning liberation. But for Egypt, Passover was divine "shock and awe," a judgment so devastating that Pharaoh surrendered.

Because of its significance, God declared that the month in which Passover occurred would be the first month or head of the year (Ex. 12:2; Deut. 16:1). However the Jews reckoned time while in Egypt, their calendar was now reorganized around this holy-day. On the 10th day of the month, each household took in a lamb to care for, then slaughtered it at twilight on the 14th day of the month (Ex. 12:3, 6). After killing the lamb, they applied its blood to the sides and top of the doorframe of their house (Ex. 12:7). That night, inside houses marked by blood, they ate the lamb along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Ex. 12:8).

At midnight on the night of Passover, there was another death—the death of anyone who was firstborn in a family. As the Israelites ate, they could hear "loud wailing in Egypt" as the firstborn were struck down in every house not marked by lamb's blood (Ex. 12:29, 30). The blood acted as a sign. If the Lord saw it on a house, He passed over it and spared those inside (Ex. 12:13). This consummate judgment broke Pharaoh's will, and he released the Israelites from slavery: "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested" (Ex. 12:31).

The Lamb and the Firstborn

First Corinthians 5:7 tells us that "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." As this verse suggests, Christ was sacrificed on Passover (Matt. 26:1, 2). For the church, and for every Christian, the reckoning of time, history, and who we are now begins with the cross of Jesus Christ. His death is an absolute division and marker between what we were before the cross and what we are because of the cross.

Participating in the Passover of Christ depends on being in Him who is our house, marked with His own blood. During the plagues of Egypt, God's judgment fell on those who ignored His message while those who responded to His message enjoyed His mercy. Likewise, anyone who believes the message of Christ enters into Him. His blood is the sign that we are not objects of destruction. Jesus is also our spiritual food, our Lamb's flesh and unleavened bread. As we eat of Christ, His death becomes part of us and not just something done for us. We are not just in the Lamb's house but the Lamb is in us—nourishing and energizing motives that are according to His Spirit (1 Cor. 15:31; Col. 1:29).

The firstborn of humanity was the first man, Adam (1 Cor. 15:45). All who live under him are slaves, as Jesus said: "[E]veryone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). We are slaves to sin because we are children of the first man and bear his likeness (1 Cor. 15:49). Romans 8:3 says Jesus took on the likeness of sinful man so that when He died, Adam was destroyed as the root and source of sin (Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:21). Adam, the firstborn, was struck down through the cross. As the Passover Lamb, Christ died for us. As the firstborn, He died as us. His death

released us from our slavery: “Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7).

Dead to the World

Passover brought an absolute division between Israel and Egypt. Whereas the two had co-existed before, they could not do so after the death of the lamb and the first-born. Egypt, the world power, was about amassing wealth, displaying human genius, achieving great things. Through Moses, Israel was called to leave all that, go out into the desert, and identify themselves with God alone. While the Egyptians consumed choice food, built the pyramids, and enjoyed many comforts, Israel lived on manna, built a mere tent for the true God, and worshiped Him by sacrificing a major source of subsistence—animals.

Galatians 6:14 says, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” The world is the society and environment that humans have fashioned to appeal to and gratify the sinful nature. Like Egypt, John says the world is about satisfying our desires, achieving things, and possessing things (1 John 2:16). When we fell, we ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). Since then, we have been a hopeless mixture of the two. That means for some, the world is sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll, so to speak. For others, it is monogamy, MADD¹, and Mozart. Worldly people can be rich, poor, environmentally conscious, polluters, prostitutes, nuns, water-skiers, or bookworms. Appearances mean nothing. Where our treasure is, there our heart is also (Matt. 6:21). We can sell our souls on Wall Street or at the Wailing Wall².

Jesus loved God and others more than personal satisfaction, more than achievement, more than possessions. Death separates every person from the world at some point. We spend our lives seeking to save ourselves and whatever we can from death, from loss, from discomfort of any kind. Jesus’s choice to give up His life was an utter repudiation of the world and its value-system. When we believe into Jesus, we believe into an irrevocable severance from the world. Paul says, “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:1, 2). We can conform to Egypt or to Christ, our Passover Lamb. We can worship God through sacrifice (like Israel in the desert) or live for personal interest.

One cautionary note: When God made the heavens and the earth, He saw that it was good (Gen. 1:31). Most things in themselves are not sinful and are meant for our enjoyment. Some think they can avoid worldliness by depriving themselves of occupation, possessions, and normal relationships. But denying ourselves the good things God has made is simply another form that worldliness can take (Col. 1:20-23). Scripture tells us to use worldly wealth to gain friends instead of hoarding it and to use the things in the world as if not engrossed in them (Luke 16:9; 1 Cor. 7:31). Isaac was returned to Abraham after he laid him on the altar to sacrifice him. In the same way, Jesus promises that the things we give up or lose because we are seeking God’s kingdom will be restored to us (Matt. 6:33; Mark 10:29, 30).

¹ Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

² The Wailing Wall is the last remaining wall of the temple in Jerusalem where many pious Jews go to repent and weep for their sins.

Squashing Snakes

Finally, Passover was considered a judgment on Egypt's gods (Num. 33:4). The fact that they were powerless to do anything as Yahweh led His people out of slavery showed their impotence and lack of consequence. Scripture identifies satan as "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Christ died in order to "destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 2:14, 15). Think about the fact that God destroyed this powerful spiritual being through something weak and contemptible—a man's execution. The cross was not just a defeat for the enemy. It was a public humiliation (Col. 2:15). Through the death of Jesus, God showed that, to Him, satan isn't even a rival. He is just a snake in the grass, squashed under His heel (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9).

Unleavened Bread

The feast of Unleavened Bread is closely tied to Passover and started the day after. Often, scripture groups both feasts under the same name, whether Passover or Unleavened Bread (Ex. 23:4-7; Deut. 16:1-8). On the first day of the feast, the Israelites removed yeast from their houses. For seven days they ate only bread made without yeast (Ex. 12:15). These are the main instructions about how this feast was observed.

Numbers 33:3 and 4 say,

The Israelites set out from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover. They marched out boldly in full view of all the Egyptians, who were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them; for the LORD had brought judgment on their gods.

These verses show two ways in which Unleavened Bread completed Passover. First, while Pharaoh released Israel from slavery because of the death of the firstborn, Israel didn't actually leave Egypt until the day after Passover, the first day of Unleavened Bread. Second, the firstborn who were struck down on Passover weren't buried until Unleavened Bread.

Six Feet Under

It is in the burial of Christ that Unleavened Bread finds its fulfillment. Christ was, in fact, in the tomb when the feast of Unleavened Bread started (Matt. 27:62-64). Burial completes death. At death, one ceases to live but only through burial is the corpse removed. These things are no less true for Christ. The Passover of the cross made our old man powerless (as seen in Romans 6:6) but didn't remove him. Only Christ's burial removed the firstborn, Adam, entirely:

Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:7, 8).

These verses show that the “yeast” of our old nature has been purged in Christ. God has given us closure on our old life. We can move on. We can “exodus.” In the spirit of moving on, Paul tells us to get rid of “the old yeast.” But this depends on the fact that we already are a new batch without the yeast of wickedness in Christ. Paul is not suggesting that we try to behave differently, as if we could remove the old yeast through willpower. He is telling us to believe in the burial of Christ. As we believe the sinful nature was removed in Him, we experience freedom from its impurity.

Colossians 2:11 and 12 discuss these same truths using the picture of circumcision: “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism....” During circumcision, flesh is cut away. The words “putting off” translate the Greek word “apekdisis,” which denotes removal, as in the stripping off of clothes. Again, through the burial of Christ, the body of flesh or sinful nature was removed.

Firstfruits

On the 16th of the first month, the day after Unleavened Bread started, the Israelites were to bring a sheaf of new grain to the priest. This was also “the day after the Sabbath,” or Sunday (Lev. 23:11). This new grain was the very first of the harvest to ripen, the firstfruits. The priest waved the sheaf before the Lord so that the people would be accepted (Lev. 23:11). These firstfruits were also a pledge of the full harvest to come, a harvest that would be of the same kind and quality as the firstfruits.

Sowing and Growing

First Corinthians 15:20 says, “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Christ was raised on Sunday, the day after Unleavened Bread, the third day after Passover, when He was crucified (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Paul goes on to compare death with the planting of seed: “What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And as for what you sow—you are not sowing the future body, but only a seed, perhaps of wheat or another grain” (1 Cor. 15:36, 37). Of all the human seeds planted in graves, Christ was the first to sprout, to break ground, to rise above it. Christ’s resurrection is a pledge that we are accepted and will be raised as well: “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, so we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5).

But Paul’s comments make it clear that we shouldn’t consider the seed body and the resurrection body equivalent, as if resurrection is just the reanimation of a corpse. Instead, the seed body and resurrection body are as different as an apple seed and an apple tree. Resurrection isn’t just about restored life but transformed being: “The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:42-44).

While the resurrection body radically differs from the seed body in form, they are the same in nature. When a corn kernel is planted, that which sprouts (as the kernel is broken down by moisture and pressure) is corn. The stalk and leaves that push above ground bear little resemblance to the kernel but are nonetheless corn. And when the plant heads out, it bears an ear full of corn kernels. From kernel to mature plant, it is corn.

First John 3:9 says God’s seed is in us. Both now and when we are raised from the dead, we share the divine nature of that seed, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16). If God’s seed is not in us, we raise up very different foliage and fruit. This is why Christ said “those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:29). God will not have a mixture of seeds (Deut. 22:9). Those that grow from a seed other than Christ are separated and burned (Matt. 13:40-43).

The resurrection body also comes with increase. A seed is always much smaller than the plant that grows from it. Jesus said of Himself, “I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop” (John 12:24). The risen Christ is not just the Nazarene brought back to life. He is a many-membered body composed of all who believe and are baptized into him (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). We are the increase, the large crop coming from His death. Similarly, our resurrection bodies will be an increase and harvest of whatever we planted—whether God’s seed or another (Gal. 6:7, 8). Paul points out that men, animals, sun, moon, and stars all have differing bodies; each body also has its own type of splendor (1 Cor. 15:39-41). Depending on what we have sown, resurrection bodies growing

from the seed of Christ will bloom in many varieties just as roses may differ in color, petals, thorns, and other traits. Still, we do not bloom for our own distinction. We are part of the garden of Christ. The beauty of any one flower exists for the garden, and the fragrance of any one flower is part of the fragrance of Christ.

I Am the Resurrection

The verses we have been considering in 1 Corinthians 15 focus on our future bodily resurrection. But resurrection is not first and foremost a bodily reality. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25, 26). Christ is the firstfruits. Christ is our resurrection now, not just in the future: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). When we believe into Christ, we believe into Him who rose from the dead and now lives to God (Rom. 6:10). As we have said, the old covenant priest waved the firstfruits before the Lord as a representative of the crop to come. The risen Christ also waved Himself before God. Because of this, God considers us to have risen from the dead in Christ, and our hearts are infused with resurrection life even now (Rom. 8:11). Again, resurrection is not just about reanimation. It’s about transformation and increase. Our changed lives and spiritual growth testify that the transformation of the resurrection is already occurring. Paul says, “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). Resurrection sprouts now, in the heart, grows secretly in the soul, then comes to full bloom in the body. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17).

“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”

Weeks/Pentecost

In the third month, the Israelites observed the Feast of Weeks, presumably named because it was held seven weeks and one day after Firstfruits. This span of time equals 50 days, so the feast also came to be known as Pentecost (=“fiftieth”) (Lev. 23:15, 16; Acts 2:1). During this 50 days, more of the harvest ripened. This new grain was waved before the Lord as were the firstfruits but with one important difference: it was baked into two loaves of bread made with yeast (Lev. 23:17).

A Growing Harvest

When Acts chapter two begins, we find the first disciples praying together on the Feast of Pentecost. As the fledgling church prayed, the Holy Spirit was poured out. Christ, we have seen, was the firstfruits when He rose from the dead. The first Christians were like the next portion of new grain that ripened during the seven weeks that followed Firstfruits; through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they were ushered into Christ’s resurrection and became firstfruits themselves.³ This is the fulfillment of Weeks or Pentecost.

Christ’s Anointing

Throughout the scriptures, the Holy Spirit is represented by oil. Oil was poured on prophets, priests, and kings as a sign that the Holy Spirit would empower them for their office (Psalm 105:15; Ex. 29:7; 1 Sam. 10:1). When David was anointed by Samuel, scripture says, “So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power” (1 Sam. 16:13; cf Acts 10:38).

On Pentecost, Peter explained the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this way: “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32, 33). God anointed Jesus with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, choosing Him to be Christ (=“Anointed One”) (Acts 2:36).⁴ Christ’s anointing then flowed down to the first Christians, joining Christ and His people into one body through one Spirit.

Psalm 133 helps us visualize what happened on the day of Pentecost: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes” (Psalm 133:1, 2). The head and body are one through the flowing down of the oil just as Christ (our head) and His body are one in the Holy Spirit. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor.12:13).

³ Obviously, this wasn’t bodily resurrection as was Christ’s. But as seen in the last section, resurrection is first a spiritual reality and will later be a bodily reality.

⁴ Acts 10:38 says Jesus was anointed during His earthly ministry as well. Death, of course, ends the anointing and office of a person (Heb. 7:23). This was no less true for Christ when He died on the cross. The anointing of Pentecost was a new anointing for the risen Christ who would perform an eternal ministry.

Anointed in Christ

Sharing in Christ's anointing means several things. First John 2:20 says, "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." The Holy Spirit reminds us of everything Jesus said, testifies of Him, and leads us into all truth in Him (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13-15). First Corinthians 2:12 says, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us." The Christian life is not one of "blind faith" where we serve without knowing our Master's business. Instead, we are friends, informed participants who know the Lord, share His thinking, and value His methods (John 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:16). We can expect that the Holy Spirit will personally help us understand the scriptures, unfold God's desires in Christ, give us specific guidance for our lives, and impart heavenly wisdom (Jas 3:17).

The Holy Spirit also supplies the capability and competence to minister and represent Christ in the ways He has called (2 Cor. 3:5, 6). Scripture mentions many abilities the Holy Spirit may give us. Speaking in tongues, writing songs or poetry, governing, metalsmithing, pastoring, interpreting dreams, giving to charity...there are, literally, as many spiritual skill sets as there are people (Ex. 31:1-5; Dan. 1:17; 1 Cor. 12:4-11, 28; Rom. 12:6-7). This wonderful diversity of spiritual gifts may be employed in service to the church and the secular world.

As we give ourselves in the ways God has called us, it is vital to remember that the anointing is on Christ, not on us. We share in it simply because we are in Him (Eph. 1:13). Some conceive of the anointing as an almost temperamental, flighty presence: if we have spent enough time with God and are living up to His expectations, then He will anoint us. If we have failed in some way or if we aren't at our spiritual peak ("prayed up" or "filled up") because of some lack of discipline, then the anointing will leave us or not show up when we need it. But the anointing is on Christ, and, since we are in Christ, the anointing cannot be removed from us unless we can be removed from Christ. Anointing is every bit as unchanging in Christ as His blood and forgiveness. It is always available, not because we behave, but because we believe (Gal. 3:2). It isn't recent sins, failure to pray enough, or lack of Bible study that affects the flow of God's Spirit. It is the unbelief of meditating on these things that robs us of the anointing that is always ours in Christ. If we believe the truth, we believe that our union with Christ—and therefore with the anointing of His Spirit—never changes. Believing this, in turn, will improve our morals, our prayer life, and all the other things we try to maintain for fear of losing the anointing.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Acts records several instances where the Holy Spirit is imparted through the laying on of hands. Based on such verses, some teach that receiving the Spirit is a separate event or experience from being born again. Receiving the Holy Spirit is referred to as "baptism in the Holy Spirit," "being filled with the Spirit," and other names. People who advocate for the baptism of the Holy Spirit believe a Christian's experience of God's supernatural power and anointing will be limited without this experience.

Scripture isn't absolutely clear on how the Holy Spirit is given or whether a second experience is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit. Paul, for instance, came across some who had believed in Jesus and were water-baptized in His name but hadn't received the Spirit (Acts 19:1-6). When Paul laid his hands on them and prayed, the Spirit came on them and signs occurred.

In the case of Cornelius, however, the Holy Spirit filled everyone in his house as they listened to Peter preaching Christ to them for the first time (Acts 10:44).

Under the old covenant, a person could only be anointed by a minister who was anointed himself. This would seem to support the view that the Holy Spirit is given by the laying on of hands: a person already anointed by the Spirit anoints another person with the Spirit. Still, John the Baptist said Jesus will baptize “with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Jesus, it would seem, can baptize in the Spirit with or without human agency.

Given that scripture records different methods of giving and receiving the Holy Spirit, perhaps it is best not to be dogmatic on this point. One thing is certain: the Holy Spirit wants us focused on Jesus, not on arguments about how He is received. As discussed, the greater reality is that we are anointed with the Holy Spirit because we are in Jesus, the Anointed One. Our faith in Christ’s anointing, whether expressed through the laying on of hands or some other means, allows us to participate in the empowering of God through His Spirit.

A Covenant in the Spirit

Sharing in the Spirit also means a change of covenant. Exodus 19:1 and 2 say, “In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai...and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain.” It was on Mount Sinai that God descended in fire and gave Moses the commandments on stone tablets (Ex. 19:18, 31:18). The season of Pentecost was associated with the giving of the law and with the covenant of Moses. But since the death and resurrection of Christ, Pentecost commemorates the giving of the Spirit—which descended on the church in tongues of fire—and the new covenant of Christ.

Paul said of the Corinthians, “You show that you are a letter from Christ...written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” (2 Cor. 3:3). The new covenant consists in lives changed by the Spirit whereas the old covenant merely described how a changed person would act. The law tells us what we shall and shall not do. The Spirit tells us what Christ has done. The law says, “The man who does these things will live by them” (Rom. 10:5; Lev. 18:5). Christ says to us, “[A]part from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). From Mount Ebal the Levites pronounced a curse on “everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law” (Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26). From the cross Christ announced, “It is finished” (John 19:30). The law demands fruit from a dead tree. The Spirit becomes the source of fruit that will last (John 15:16; Gal. 5:22, 23).

One Man, One Loaf, One People

We have seen how Christ and the church were joined into one body by one Spirit. Christians are joined, not only to Christ, but to one another. This is pictured in one of the sacrifices offered on Pentecost, a sacrifice not offered on the other feast days: two lambs were sacrificed as a fellowship or peace offering (Lev. 23:19). It is important to note that both lambs comprised one offering. Ephesians 2:15 and 16 say, “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.” “The two” mentioned in this verse are Jews and Gentiles. The two lambs offered on Pentecost show us how Christ represented Jew and Gentile in a single sacrifice and brought their hostility to the cross. While Paul only mentions Jews and Gentiles, we can fairly apply this teaching to any individual or

people group. Whether because of ethnicity, religious background, culture, race, or a thousand other things, human history is full of division and hostility. The gospel says that division and hostility ended when Jesus died. In Him there are no longer divided men; there is one New Man.

Unity of the body is also represented by the loaves waved before the Lord on Pentecost. Individual grains are ground and baked into bread just as individuals become one body in Christ. The use of yeast in these loaves is of particular interest because 1) only unleavened bread could be used during Passover and Unleavened Bread; 2) with few exceptions, scripture speaks of yeast as an impurity that taints whatever it is added to (Lev. 2:11; 1 Cor. 5:8; Matt. 16:6; Gal. 5:9).

In the case of Pentecost, yeast has clearly been redeemed. Of the three annual feasts which follow Pentecost, none requires the use of unleavened bread. Like the lambs offered on Pentecost, the use of leavened bread may also point to God's acceptance of non-Jews and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles into one people. Acts records that Hebrews and converts to Judaism "from every nation under heaven" were present when the Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5, 11). Since God had made all nations clean through the blood of Christ, it was acceptable for them to "leaven" the Jewish people (Acts 10:13-15). The giving of the Spirit was, to the early church, an unequivocal sign that God had removed the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and that both had a new citizenship of the Spirit, not of national origin or ethnicity (Acts 15:7-9; Php. 3:20). The fact that there are two loaves of the same bread suggests this same truth. As one people Jews and Gentiles were "waved" in Christ, our Priest, and accepted by God.

Trumpets

On the first day of the seventh month, the Israelites were to “have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts” (Lev. 23:24). The purpose of this commemoration isn’t entirely clear. Unlike the preceding feasts, Trumpets isn’t associated with the history of the exodus or with Israel’s agricultural seasons. Other than instructions about offerings to be made that day, there is little else written about Trumpets in the Old Testament.

“Long Live the King!”

The New Testament says even less about Trumpets than the Old. While other feasts are discussed directly, the New Testament offers no commentary at all about Trumpets. This means discovering the fulfillment of Trumpets isn’t a straightforward task. Many connect Trumpets with the rapture based on 1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 17:

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

While this verse does mention a trumpet, there are difficulties with this interpretation. Connecting Trumpets with the rapture makes its fulfillment in the future. Consequently, the remaining feasts—The Day of Atonement and Tabernacles—must also have future fulfillments. For the Day of Atonement in particular, a future fulfillment of any kind is problematic. Hebrews 9 shows that Christ fulfilled this feast through His ministry as High Priest (to be considered more thoroughly in the next section). If the Day of Atonement has already been fulfilled it would seem out of sequence to say we are still waiting for the fulfillment of Trumpets.

So far, we have seen that the meaning of the feasts and the order in which they occur is tied to the Person and work of Christ. Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits show Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. What aspect of Christ’s ministry fits with Trumpets, which occurs after Pentecost (Christ’s anointing) but before the Day of Atonement (Christ’s High Priestly work)? First Kings 1:34 and 39 illustrate one possibility:

There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, “Long live King Solomon!” [...] Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, “Long live King Solomon!”

Here we have a pattern: The new king is anointed, then announced with trumpets. The coronations of Jehu and Joash follow this pattern as well, suggesting this was something of a tradition in Israel (2 Kings 9:12-13; 11:12-14). Trumpets were also blown when Absalom tried to usurp David’s rule but since God had not chosen him there was no anointing.

The Old Testament sequence of installing a king suggests that Christ's anointing (Pentecost) was followed by His coronation as King of kings (Trumpets).⁵ When we discuss the Day of Atonement we will see how this feast also fits with the logic of this pattern.

Reign of the Lamb

It is important to understand who it is God has crowned King of kings. Hebrews 2:9 says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death..." Philippians 2:5-11 tell us every knee will bow to Jesus because He "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Christ received ultimate authority because He relinquished all authority. Christ's will is supreme because He said, "Not my will" (Eccl. 8:4; Matt. 26:39). God's fullness dwells in Christ because He emptied Himself (Php. 2:7; Col. 2:9).

In the language of the feasts, the coronation of Trumpets is rooted in the sacrifice of Passover. Revelation 5 shows us that the one whom God has crowned is, in fact, the Passover Lamb:

Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. [...] And they sang a new song: "You are worthy...because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth (Rev. 5:6-10).

This passage raises another stunning point: We reign with Christ. We are the body of the King. How can we even begin to grasp what such a statement means?

We too must start with Passover if we are to understand what it means to reign with Christ. Our Passover Lamb rules by self-sacrificing love. We only reign with Him to the extent that we share His motivations. "If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:11, 12). We wear the crown of life because we share the crown of thorns (John 19:2; Jas 1:12).

All Authority

Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded" (Matt. 28:18-20). The gospel of Trumpets is, "Jesus is King!" He sends us out in all authority to trumpet this message so that people will learn of Him and conform to Him. Here again it is important to remember that our authority is given by the Passover Lamb. When some Samaritans didn't want Jesus coming through their village, James and John asked if they should call down fire on them. Jesus rebuked them and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of" (Luke 9:54-56). Jesus wasn't interested in forcing anyone to accept Him. Scripture says His face was set like flint toward Jerusalem, where He was to be crucified (Luke 9:51).

We disciples face opposition as we go out into the world. There is many a "village" that doesn't want us around. We know Jesus. We know His value. We know that every person has a

⁵ Some may rightly note that Jesus claimed to be King before going to the cross (John 18:37). While this is true, death prevented Jesus from continuing in any office or ministry. Trumpets recognizes that when Jesus rose from the dead He received a new coronation as the eternal King of an eternal kingdom (Heb. 1:8).

deep need for the Lord. When others don't recognize or receive Him, it is easy to feel anxious for them or even offended. But when we are tempted to confront, to call down hellfire, to argue and to push until they accept Jesus, we need to remember our Master headed to the cross to die for them. Laying down our lives for others should be more important than trying to convince them of our viewpoint (1 John 3:16). If we allow the Spirit of Passover to move us, He will command devotion and obedience because His self-giving nature is truly worthy of these things.

Overcoming King

Just before dying on the cross, Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). "Trouble" alludes to life in a fallen world. With everything from genocide to economic strain to sexual confusion plaguing us, "trouble" seems an almost comic understatement. Yet Jesus tells us to have peace in Him because He has overcome. When a crying toddler has us on the ropes, Jesus has overcome that. When we have one drink too many, Jesus has overcome that. When disease takes someone we love, Jesus has overcome that. However we want to fill in the blank—with divorce, school shootings, mass starvation, or depression—Jesus has overcome.

The question is, *How did Jesus overcome?* We know that Adam didn't follow God's command in the garden. In effect, Adam said to God, "Not what you want but what I want." Since then, every individual has pursued what they want instead of what God wants. Adam's choice was the proverbial pebble thrown in the pond. The ripples from that choice have surged into the tidal waves of problems that threaten to sweep us away on a daily basis. Jesus, however, made a different choice. He said to God, "Not what I want but what you want" (Matt. 26:39). The world was first overcome in the heart of Christ when He chose to do what the Father wanted and to die on the cross.

Christ's choice is having its own ripple effect. 1 John 5:5 says, "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." When we believe in Jesus, we receive a new heart, the heart of Christ, which wants what the Father wants (Ezek. 36:26, 27). As we live by that heart, we start to overcome the effects of the fall in our own lives.

By extension, the church is a gathering of those with new hearts. To be sure, we still deal with each other's failings and sins. But we also get a glimpse of life in a community where the fall is no longer a reality. The church is a window to an existence that is coming and yet is already at work within us—where there is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain, where the old order has passed away and all things are new (Rev. 21:4, 5). We bring the culture of overcoming to our interactions with people in this world. To those whose only reality is living with the conditions of the fall, we can offer compassion and respite from "trouble."

The ripples of the cross continue beyond the church and human society. One day, the universe will be liberated from every last trace of the fall (Rom. 8:21). The manifestation of this won't occur until Christ returns. But the fact of it began at the cross. For every kind of sin, problem, sickness, and disorder of nature, we can find a corresponding cure in Christ's death and resurrection. It would take a whole other book to explore this in any detail. But Trumpets announces, with fanfare, that Jesus has overcome and continues to overcome through us: "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

Trampling Snakes and Scorpions

Christ ruined satan when He died on the cross. We saw a figure of this in Passover. Trumpets shouts that Christ has been crowned, and the prince of this world has been driven out (John 12:31). The war is over. All things are under His feet (Eph. 1:22). The devil has no hold in Him (John 14:30). When Jesus approaches, He causes even a legion of demons to tremble and beg for mercy (Mark 5:6-10). The coronation of Trumpets means that, in Christ, we have “authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). The word “trample” doesn’t imply a struggle for the upper hand. It means rolling like tanks over our enemy. It means we can drive out spirits with a word (Matt. 8:16).

This doesn’t mean satan can’t still operate and carry out attacks. After Germany surrendered in 1945, Allied forces moving through Europe encountered pockets of German soldiers who hadn’t heard the war was over. Battles ensued, just as they had before VE Day, and casualties resulted from these encounters. In the same way, the devil still attacks and inflicts spiritual casualties, even though the war is over. We need to be alert and ready to resist enemy forces (1 Peter 5:8-9). But as we resist, it is crucial to maintain perspective. Satan is a defeated foe, not a foe we have to defeat. If, in our minds, the cross was anything less than VE Day (“Victory over the Enemy”), then no amount of prayer, fasting, rebuking the devil, or spiritual warfare will make a difference. It isn’t our moral purity, dedication to prayer, or anything else about us that defeats the enemy. It is the blood of the Lamb and the word of the cross (Rev. 12:11). If we don’t meet the enemy on the ground of the cross, we may be giving him grounds to continually provoke us because we have given him no reason to retreat (Matt. 4:11; James 4:7). Either we trust that Christ finished the enemy or we trust in the things we do to finish what Christ could not.

Some final considerations: Jesus had to give satan permission to enter Judas (John 13:26, 27). God allowed a messenger of satan to torment Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-9). Satan needed permission from God each time he struck Job (Job 1:12, 2:6). We often think of satan as a rebel God is unable to control. While rebellion is certainly one of satan’s core motives, he has no power to act outside the limits God sets for him. When the enemy attacks we can rest in the knowledge that what satan intends for harm, God intends for good (Gen. 50:20). Romans 8:28 says, “But we know that for those loving God, for those called according to His purpose, everything is working together for good.” Nothing satan can do falls outside of the word “everything” in Romans 8:28. Even his worst, most depraved activities can further God’s purposes. Consider the cross: God didn’t stop the murder of His own Son. He allowed the devil to do what he wanted. Our enemy was so blinded by his desire to destroy Jesus he didn’t even realize the death of Christ would destroy him (1 John 3:8; 1 Cor. 2:8). The cross shows how absolute God’s authority is. We tend to think God is in control only if He stops suffering and injustice. But God doesn’t have to control everything to be in control. His power is most perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). Trumpets preaches that Christ crucified is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:24).

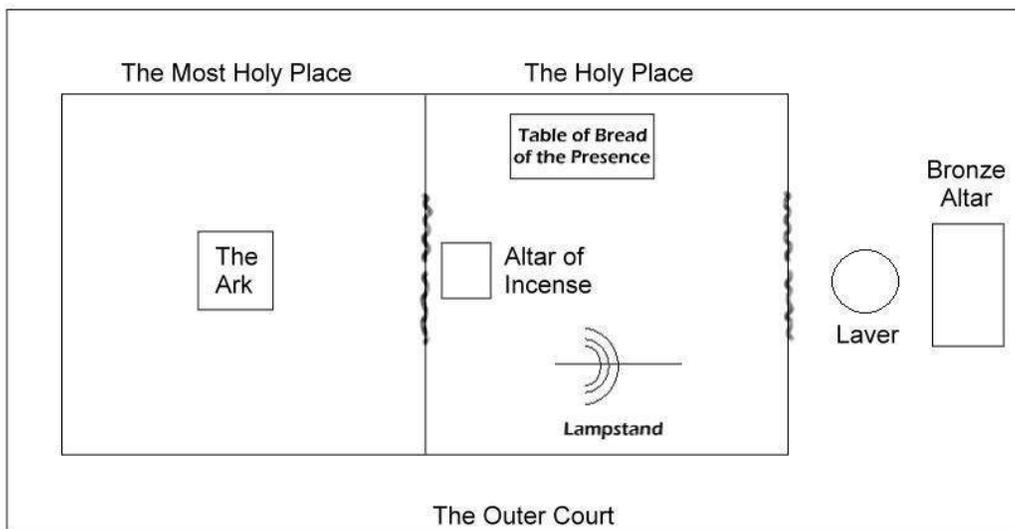
“God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne” (Psalm 47:6-8).⁶

⁶ In Jewish tradition, Trumpets commemorates God’s coronation as King of the universe (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosh_Hashanah; <http://www.torah.org/learning/yomtov/roshhashanah/#>; http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Fall_Holidays/Rosh_Hashannah/rosh_hashannah.html).

The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month. On this day, the Israelites were to practice “self-denial” (usually understood to mean fasting) while various sacrifices were made (Lev. 23:27). Through these offerings, the Lord promised, “Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD” (Lev. 16:30). This was a staggering promise. Though God dwelled in the midst of Israel, He was sealed off from them inside the tent of meeting (and later the temple). Because of their sins, He could not commingle with them or they would die. As the picture below illustrates, God was separated from Israel by a series of veiled chambers. People could enter into the outer court in order to bring offerings to the priests. Only priests could enter into the Holy Place and minister there. And once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest alone could enter into the Most Holy Place where God dwelled (Heb. 9:7).

The Tent of Meeting



A Priest on His Throne

The book of Hebrews identifies Jesus as High Priest of the new covenant, a priest in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:5, 6). Melchizedek was a priest who blessed Abram (Gen. 14:18-20). As a priest, Melchizedek foreshadowed Christ. This is why Christ is said to be in the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 7:1-3 give us further understanding:

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. [...] First, his name means, “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.

Here we see why the Day of Atonement follows Pentecost (Christ’s Anointing) and Trumpets (Christ’s Coronation). As was said in the discussion about Pentecost, kings and priests were

among those anointed as a sign that the Holy Spirit would empower them in their office. The verses just quoted from Hebrews show that the order of Melchizedek is an order of King-Priests. Christ's anointing at Pentecost not only empowered Him as God's chosen King but as High Priest of eternity. This order of King-Priests was also predicted by Zechariah when he prophesied about Joshua, son of Jehozadak, who was high priest after the exile: "It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne" (Zech. 6:13). "Jesus" is the Greek translation of "Joshua." Joshua, son of Jehozadak, was a figure of Jesus, our King-Priest to come.

Scripture tells us that the tent of meeting was "a copy and shadow of what is in heaven" (Heb. 8:5; Exodus 25:40). When Jesus performed His high-priestly ministry, He did not enter "a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence" (Heb. 9:24). Through His heavenly ministry, as we will see, Jesus made us righteous and forged eternal peace between us and God (Rom. 5:19; Col. 1:20). This is why, like Melchizedek, He is King of Righteousness and King of Peace.

Two Goats

Of all the offerings made on the Day of Atonement, the most significant was probably the sin offering. Leviticus 16:5 says that the high priest was "to take from the Israelite community two male goats for a sin offering...." Note that both goats constituted a single sin offering. Lots were cast for the goats: "one lot for the LORD and the other for azazel" (Lev. 16:8).⁷ The goat chosen for the Lord was slaughtered; with the goat's blood, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place and the presence of God, then sprinkled the blood on the ark seven times (Lev. 16:15). In the same way, blood was sprinkled on the Holy Place and the bronze altar in the outer court (Lev. 16:16-19). Leviticus 16:16 explains why the blood was sprinkled: "He will purify the most holy place in this way for all their sins because of the Israelites' impurities and rebellious acts. He will do the same for the tent of meeting that remains among them, because it is surrounded by their impurities."

After making purification with the blood of the first goat, the second part of the sin offering—the goat for azazel—was presented before the Lord. The high priest would lay his hands on the goat's head, confess all of Israel's sins, and transfer them to the goat's head. Bearing all of Israel's sins on itself, the goat was then led out into the desert—away from the presence of the Lord—and released (Lev. 16:21, 22).

The significance of the goat for azazel isn't entirely clear. "Azazel" can mean "entire removal" or could be the name of a demon that haunted the desert. This second goat clearly removed sin from Israel's camp as the first definition suggests. But if "azazel" is the name of a demon, why would the Lord send it a goat carrying Israel's sins? In any case, once the sin offering of the two goats was finished, atonement was made for all of Israel's sins that year (Lev. 16:34).

The True Sin Offering

Romans 8:3 tells us that Christ was sent to be a sin offering. Christ's sin offering was foreshadowed by the goats offered on the Day of Atonement, and each goat has something to teach us about Christ's sacrifice. No sins were confessed or placed on the goat for the Lord but

⁷ The goat for azazel is traditionally called the scapegoat.

it's blood was shed for the sins of the people. This shows us that "Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Jesus suffered for our impurity though He Himself was without sin (Heb. 4:15). As High Priest, the risen Christ entered God's presence "once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). In other words, Christ's blood permanently and completely erased every sin that has been committed, that is being committed now, or that will be committed. The blood of Jesus is so effective that no other sacrifice will ever be needed to cleanse from sin (Heb. 10:18).

These things being true, the writer of Hebrews gives a stunning invitation: "Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance faith brings..." (Heb. 10:19-22). Jesus's blood has eliminated the need for God to separate Himself by veils or curtains. Our High Priest's ministry has opened the way for all of us to enter the Most Holy Place and the presence of God. And we are to do so with confidence and assurance, not cowering and guilt-ridden. Other than confessing sins and believing the blood of Jesus has cleansed them, sin should no longer be a factor in our relationship with God.

What can the goat for azazel show us about Christ? Hebrews 9:26 and 28 say, "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. [...] Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people..." While the goat for azazel isn't specifically mentioned in these verses, we can see it in the fact that Christ bore all sin on Himself and took it away. Leviticus 16:22 says, "The goat will carry on it all their wrongdoings into a desolate land..." Christ could not have carried all our sins to a place more desolate than the grave. And the grave is a place from which nothing returns (except the risen Christ!).

What of the idea that azazel names an evil spirit in the desert? When Jesus was arrested and His suffering began, He said, "[T]his is your hour—when darkness reigns" (Luke 22:53). Jesus walked the road to the cross alone. His friends betrayed and denied Him. People told lies about Him. He was humiliated, made fun of, beaten, spat on, tortured, and finally murdered with the approval of those who should have promoted justice. Behind this grotesque display of human depravity, we can see the one who is accuser, murderer, and father of lies, pulling the puppet strings (Rev. 12:10; John 8:44). Carrying all of our sins, stumbling under the weight of the cross and wracked with pain, Jesus was sent away from His Father and handed over to the devil.

However delighted satan may have been to mock and torture Christ, the cross was his end, a fact we have amply discussed. First John 3:5 says, "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins." Here we see Jesus as the goat for azazel, carrying sin away. A few verses later, John says, "The devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8). Sin is the devil's work. Since he introduced it, the serpent has used sin to dominate and ruin humanity. By sin, satan hoped to turn everyone against God and to wage an all out assault on God's vision of a creation filled with Christ. Without sin, the devil has no weapon, no strategy, no means of attack. By removing sin, Jesus destroyed satan and everything he was working to achieve.

Disgraceful Grace

As we have seen, the first goat offered on the Day of Atonement was slaughtered, and the high priest carried its blood into the Most Holy Place. Leviticus 16:27 tells us that, once drained of its redeeming blood, the goat's body was taken to a place designated for unclean things and was burned. The sin offering was made to cover sins committed, not only by the people, but by the high priest himself⁸. It was the human priest and the people who needed the atoning blood yet the animal from which the saving blood was drawn was expelled from the camp in disgrace. The priest in need of forgiveness retained his reputation and his place in the sanctuary of God, while the sacrifice was cast out and treated like an unclean thing.

Hebrews 13:11-13 provide spiritual insight into these things:

The high priest carries the blood of the animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.

Jesus, the holy, sinless, Son of God, was arrested like a criminal, then interrogated by the high priest and the other religious leaders (Matt. 26:57). After false witnesses failed to present convincing evidence of His guilt, Jesus condemned Himself by truthfully stating He was the Christ (Matt. 26:59-64). In a dramatic show of piety, the high priest tore his clothes and shouted "Blasphemy!" at the true High Priest (Matt. 26:65). The religious leaders sentenced Jesus to death, a death He would die to save them from death; the people approved by spitting in Jesus's face, slapping Him, ridiculing Him, and inflicting the suffering that would save them (Matt. 26:66-68). At the judgment seat of Christ, everyone will receive what they deserve for their actions (2 Cor. 5:10). But at the judgment seat of Pilate, Jesus was punished for His innocence while Barabbas—a violent political activist—was pardoned (Luke 23:18, 19). Finally, Jesus—who had given freely to anyone who asked—was led outside the holy city, Jerusalem, to be executed with two thieves.

To the crowds looking on as Jesus breathed His last, He was a despicable hypocrite, the Jerry Falwell or Jim Bakker of His time. As the righteous people of God they had lawfully stamped out a false prophet. Yet as they cursed Him, He was removing the curse from them (Gal. 3:13). As they accused, He overcame every accusation against them (Rev. 12:10, 11). As they wounded Him, He healed them (1 Peter 2:24).

Leviticus 16:28 says the one who burned the hide of the sin offering outside the camp was unclean. This was, perhaps, an Old Testament picture of those who go to Jesus outside the camp to share His disgrace. To fellowship with the true Sin Offering is to be called unclean with Him. It is to endure seasons of suspicion and exclusion imposed by others in the church. It is to give up public opinion, the esteem of friends, and even self-regard for the company of Christ. Of course, we do not seek for these things to happen. But if we seek the Lord, we will sometimes find that to go to Him we must choose between Him and the camp.

⁸ The two goats were the sin offering for the people. A separate sin offering of a young bull was offered for the High Priest and his family (Lev. 16:6). For the sake of clarity and brevity, discussion about the sin offering has been limited to the two goats.

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. [...] He was assigned a grave with the wicked...though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth” (Isaiah 53:4, 9).

Beyond Eden

After the fall, man was sent out of Eden, away from God’s presence. God posted cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen. 3:23). Cherubim were also embroidered into the veil barring the way to the Most Holy Place in the tent of meeting (Ex. 26:31). Christ (as the goat for azazel) was sent away in our place. As High Priest, Jesus bypassed the cherubim and went behind the veil by His own blood so that we could return to God’s presence (Heb. 6:19, 20).

The Day of Atonement brings a different perspective to the feasts. The preceding feasts looked at aspects of Christ’s work individually. But atonement was a work that began with Christ’s death and was completed in His resurrection ministry. The Day of Atonement allows us to see this continuity. It presents Christ’s death and resurrection ministry as a single “day,” one complete work that reversed what happened at the fall. It isn’t just that sins have been forgiven. Because of Christ it is as if the fall never happened. In fact, it is even better than that because we have the right to eat from the tree of life—the life in the Son (Rev. 2:7; 1 John 5:11). This never happened before the fall. As perfect as Eden was, it still wasn’t life in Christ.

The superiority of Christ to Eden is suggested by details in John’s description of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem isn’t necessarily a picture of heaven or any place at all. Considering the foundations bear the apostles’ names and the gates have the names of the tribes of Israel, the New Jerusalem seems to be people of all ages who are one with God (Rev. 21:12, 14). The New Jerusalem is also called “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Rev. 21:9). Jesus hasn’t joined Himself to a place but He has joined Himself to a people. The bride of Christ is a lush garden inside (Gen. 2:8; SOS 4:12). She is so full of life it flows out of her like a river (Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1). Whereas Eden had many kinds of trees, including the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the New Jerusalem has only one tree, the tree of life, which unceasingly brings forth and bears fruit (Gen. 2:8, 9; John 15:16; Rev. 22:2). In her heart, the curse uttered after the fall is no more. In Eden there was evening and morning. But there is no evening for the bride. She shares an eternal Sabbath with her husband, the King-Priest who sat down after He made purification for sins (Heb. 1:3).

True Fasting

As mentioned, people were to practice self-denial or fast throughout the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:32). This appointed fast is discussed in Isaiah 58. Through Isaiah, God communicates the spirit of the fast on the Day of Atonement:

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (Isaiah 58:6, 7).

These verses show that God values a self-giving lifestyle much more than ritual self-deprivation. God wants us to live from the heart, not the stomach. This is why Jesus said, “If anyone wants to

come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). The Christ lifestyle is one lived unto the cross. This is true fasting.

Second Corinthians 5:15 says, “And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” Any Israelite who took to heart the depth of their sins and the extravagant mercy offered through the sin offering might have lost their appetite. For them, fasting might have been a natural response of repentance, besides being commanded by God. In the same way, we respond to Christ’s sin offering by “fasting,” by living for Him and not ourselves. This isn’t a rule God commands us to follow. It is the natural response of a heart changed by the love of Christ who gave Himself for us.

As the verses from Isaiah 58 suggest, a sacrificial lifestyle can take many forms. We may accept a leadership position for which we feel ill-prepared and unqualified. We may apologize first, even though another person is at fault. God may give us an opportunity to share Christ in a setting where it isn’t comfortable. Ministry to the homeless or opening our homes to travelers may be ways we give ourselves. Regardless of how it looks, if we are being transformed by Christ’s sacrifice, we will respond when God asks us to offer ourselves.

Denying self and taking up the cross daily is the difference between vital spirituality and hollow religion: “For, as I have often told you before...many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame” (Php. 3:18, 19). The enemies of the cross to which Paul is referring are not those who are godless, immoral, drunks or murderers. He is talking about people who keep the law, who are moral and worship God, yet refuse the “fasting” of the cross (Php. 3:3-7). God’s end goal isn’t that we conform to religious behavior. His goal isn’t that we gather in special buildings, sing songs to Him, tithe, and have potlucks (though we may do all of these). God’s eternal desire is that we are conformed to Christ’s sacrifice and live as sacrifices ourselves (Rom. 12:1).

A Kingdom of Priests

Those who have been redeemed by the sin offering of Christ and who live in the image of His sacrifice join the order of Melchizedek and minister as king-priests under Christ, the High Priest: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood...” (1 Peter 2:9). As priests, we share the good news that Christ’s sin offering has cleansed us of every sin and “plead on Christ’s behalf, ‘Be reconciled to God’” (2 Cor. 5:20). Since we face our own failings every day, we are able to “deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray” (Heb. 5:2).

We also spread the good news by meeting needs and loving others in concrete ways. John says, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16). As Jesus continues to lay down His life through us it becomes easier for people to believe God loves and forgives them.

Tabernacles

From the 15th through the 22nd of the seventh month, the Israelites were to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Lev. 23:34). On the first and eighth days of the feast, God's people were to observe special Sabbath days (Lev. 23:35, 36). Whereas God commanded 10 to 13 sacrifices be made on other feast days, more were required during Tabernacles. On the first day, 30 offerings were prescribed. Each successive day of the feast, one less sacrifice was made until, on the seventh day, the number of sacrifices was 24. Just 10 were required on the eighth day (Num. 29:12-38).

Throughout this feast, the Israelites were to live in tent-like structures called tabernacles or booths. This served as a reminder that the Lord had His people dwell in booths after He brought them out of Egypt (Lev. 23:42, 43). In the midst of Israel's desert camp was the Tent of Meeting, where the Lord dwelled. In a very real sense, this was the goal of the exodus: God dwelling with His people. Tabernacles celebrated the fact that Israel no longer lived separate from God in Egypt. They were now one with Him.

Finally, Tabernacles also celebrated the completion of the harvest. Whereas Firstfruits and Weeks/Pentecost commemorated the harvesting of crops which ripened early, Tabernacles highlighted the maturing and gathering of the whole crop.

The Tabernacle of God with Men

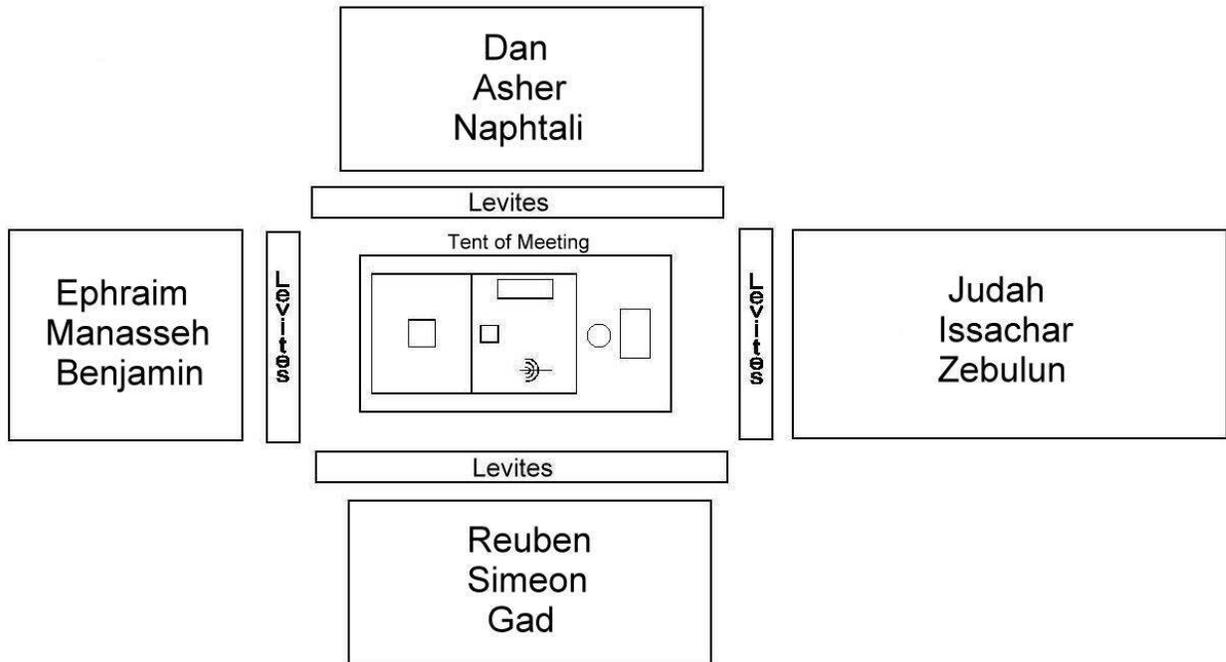
While the New Testament talks about Tabernacles being celebrated, it gives no explicit interpretation about this feast (John 7:2). Nevertheless, Revelation 21:3 paints a picture reminiscent of the Lord dwelling in tabernacles with His people after bringing them out of Egypt: "Look! the tabernacle of God is with men. He will tabernacle with them, and God Himself will be with them and be their God." Our study of Passover showed that Egypt represented the world of slavery to sin, whose god is satan. Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits) was our exodus, our liberation from "Egypt." We have been brought out of a life "without hope and without God in the world;" we are now one people dwelling or tabernacling with God (Eph. 2:12). As we saw with the Day of Atonement, Christ removed the sin-barrier that kept God from dwelling with us. Sin having been removed, God is free to live in us and we in Him (John 14:21). This has been God's end-game from the beginning: union with His people. Tabernacles was a celebration, in type, of the fact that Christ would establish God's dwelling place in His people and be eternally one with them. Fittingly, the context of Revelation 21 is marriage.

Many agree that Tabernacles pictures God indwelling and being one with His people. Some believers, however, place this indwelling/union in the future, after Christ's return. Certainly, there is a fullness of God indwelling us that we won't experience until after Christ's return. But the fact of our union with God is true now. For this reason, Tabernacles represents a time that is coming and has now come (John 4:23; 5:25).

Camp of the Cross

After leaving Egypt, God commanded that Israel's tabernacles be arranged in a particular way (Num. 2). The Lord's Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting was in the center of the camp. The priests and Levites camped directly around the Tent of Meeting. Three tribes of Israel camped to

the north of the Tent of Meeting, three to the south, three to the east, and three to the west. The tribes to the east were the most populous; the tribes camped to the north and south had nearly equal populations and were second largest; the population of the western tribes was smallest (Num. 2; 26:1-51). Below is a crude illustration of Israel's camp:



In the Lord's Tabernacle, sacrifices of animals, oil, bread, and incense were made continually. The people brought many of the animals and other things to be sacrificed; the priests offered these things on their behalf. To camp with the Lord meant participating in the sacrifices offered in His Tabernacle. For this reason, the camp was arranged as a massive cross. It pointed to the "camp" of Christ to come. With one voice, this camp says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ gave Himself for us because He loved us. To tabernacle with Him is to embody the love of the cross in our relationships. By sharing each other's burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Christ's forgiveness shines through as we are kind, compassionate, and quick to let go of offenses (Eph. 4:32). We are considerate of each other's weaknesses and struggles (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8). Food, money, and other necessities are shared as needed (1 John 3:17, 18). If a brother or sister persecutes us, we pray for them instead of gossiping about them (Matt. 5:44).

If someone looked at the camp of Israel from a high hill, they would have seen this great cross in the desert. Likewise, we hope those looking at the church from the outside see us as a community shaped by the cross. A man named Balaam did see Israel's camp from a high place once. When he did, the Spirit of God came over him. Balaam said his eyes were opened to see a vision of the Almighty, and his ears were opened to hear the word of God (Num. 24:2-4). Those that come in contact with us as we express the spirit of the cross can be powerfully impacted in the same way. Living out the love of the cross can allow them to see and hear God: "No one has

ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us” (1 John 4:12).

The Hope of Glory

Sacrifice wasn’t the only feature of the Lord’s Tabernacle or of Israel’s camp. In the Most Holy Place, overshadowing the ark of the covenant, was the glory of the Lord (Ex. 25:22). To camp with the Lord meant participating in His glory as well as His sacrifices.

Paul tells us, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Rom. 8:17). The camp of Israel is a picture of the heirs of God—those who share the sufferings and glory of Christ. In the context of Romans 8, glory speaks of all things being made new in Christ (Rev. 21:5). Christ in us is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). His glory is transforming us from fatally-flawed creatures into Christ-like sons and daughters (2 Cor. 3:18). “Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Cor. 4:16, 17). Glory’s newness flowers in the soil of suffering and sacrifice (1 Cor. 15:43).

But glory’s renewal isn’t limited to individuals or the church. Paul’s thoughts continue in Romans chapter 8:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:18-21).

The renewal now at work in us—the heirs and children of God—will one day manifest and permeate the universe. Sin and decay will be eradicated by freedom and glory. “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). The camp of Israel doesn’t show the realization of this universal renewal; it shows the community in whom God has hidden Christ—the hope of glory, the expectation that all things are being made new.

Living Tabernacles

The words “tabernacles” and “booths” are two ways to translate the Hebrew word “sukkot.” “Sukkot” denotes temporary shelters made by weaving branches together. Coupling this with Jesus’s teaching in John 15 again gives us an image of the Lord and His people dwelling in union: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit” (John 15:5). We can almost re-imagine the camp of Israel as a vineyard where the branches weave in and out of each other to form a whole field of living tabernacles; the vines of these living tabernacles all twine out from the Lord’s Tabernacle—the True Vine—in the center. This is a picture of our living union with Christ. Only within this vineyard—where life flows from the True Vine to and through and among the branches—can we bear fruit. “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John 15:4).

One House

“So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God. [...] Solomon observed the festival at that time for seven days, and all Israel with him.... On the eighth day they held an assembly, for they had celebrated the dedication of the altar for seven days and the festival for seven days more. On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart....” (2 Chron. 7:5, 8-10).

These verses from 2 Chronicles show that Solomon’s temple was completed and dedicated during the Feast of Tabernacles. As God’s house, the temple was His dwelling, the place where all people could seek and contact Him (2 Chron. 6:2). Furthermore, God gave His Name to the temple as a husband might give his name to his wife: “I have chosen and consecrated this temple so that my Name may be there forever” (2 Chron. 7:16).

Solomon’s temple brings another focus to the Feast of Tabernacles. Tents camped together convey a different sense of union than a building. We tend to think of a camp of tabernacles as individual things gathered together. But we don’t think of a building in terms of its individual parts; we think of it as a single thing. We might say tabernacles camped together are in unity (again, implying a group of individual things). But we wouldn’t say a building is a unity. We would say it is one.

Paul’s letters tell us that, in Christ, one temple is built from all individual believers (1 Cor. 3:4, 16; Eph. 2:20, 21). From the perspective of the temple, we are no longer individual Christians, denominations, cultures, or races of people. We are “a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit” (Eph. 2:22). By the same token, Peter describes us as living stones that are not just gathered together but are built together with Christ—THE Living Stone—into one spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).

The temple provides a vital perspective. Of course, individuality doesn’t end in Christ. As C.S. Lewis once observed, we become more ourselves once we come to Jesus. Even so, Christ, the one Temple, is all too easily eclipsed by personalities, creeds, ministries, movements, and other things that are individual or partial. Such things are not wrong, they just aren’t the whole. There may even be great unity among Christian persons and groups but Jesus prayed “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17:21).

Full Harvest

Tabernacles, we mentioned, celebrated the maturing and harvesting of the whole crop. Often, the idea of harvest is associated with evangelism, “reaping” souls for the kingdom of God. But evangelism is probably more like scattering seed and conversion like seed sprouting. No one harvests seeds or sprouts. Only mature plants bearing grain or fruit are harvested.

In the parable of the sower, seed is scattered over all kinds of soil. What distinguishes the good soil is that it produces a crop of 30, 60, or 100-fold (Matt. 13:23). Jesus taught that many people receive the word and are converted for a time. But seeds and sprouts only fulfill their purpose if they produce fruit worth harvesting. Additionally, fruit from individuals is welcome but does not constitute a full harvest. Ephesians 4:13 gives us a sense of the harvest God is looking for: “...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” It is the whole measure of the fullness of Christ in His body that the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows. This is the harvest God desires.

Ephesians 4 also describes how we grow into the full harvest of Christ. It starts with holding to each other, keeping the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (Eph. 4:11, 16). As we hold to each other, we function in the measure of grace apportioned to us (Eph. 4:7). Grace is given to each of us so that we can pass it on to those around us. For some of us, this means moving in the ministries Paul mentions—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Eph. 4:11). But we shouldn't limit the manifestation of God's grace to five ministries, as if Paul is giving a definitive list.⁹ Leaders and ministers are important but we will by no means attain to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ if only leaders contribute. We can only grow and build ourselves up in love “as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:16). That means every member of the church has grace from God that is vital to the growth of the church. In this vein, Paul gave the Corinthians the following guidance about their services: “When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up” (1 Cor. 14: 26).

Completion

Completion is an overarching theme of Tabernacles. As the seventh and last feast, it completed the Jewish calendar year. As we have seen, scripture also associates Tabernacles with the completion of the exodus, the harvest, and the temple.¹⁰

Spiritually, Tabernacles shows us all of God's plans and desires coming to fruition and fullness in Christ. The progression of the feasts—Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and so on—shows how God's work in Christ progressed from Jesus's death to the indwelling prefigured by Tabernacles. This indwelling is the goal and completion of God's eternal plan. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We have seen his glory....” As the Tabernacle of God among men, Jesus was a prototype of what God wanted on a corporate scale: a people in whom His glory could dwell and be seen. Individual Christians and the church exist to house and display the living God so that He can be known. As Jesus prayed, “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me” (John 17:23).

⁹ In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul gives a slightly different list. This suggests he is just giving examples of ministries.

¹⁰ Long before the law of Moses commanded this feast, Noah's ark came to rest in the mountains of Ararat on the 17th day of the seventh month—during the time that would be the Feast of Tabernacles! The landing of the ark signified the completion of Noah's exodus, the end of the pre-flood world, and the fullness of God's salvation at that time.

Last But Not Least

So far, we have discussed the feasts individually and considered those things that make them distinct from one another. However, there are other features that were common to every feast. This final section will be given to discussing the significance of observances that were consistent from feast to feast.

“I Will Give You Rest”

Special Sabbaths (in addition to the regular, weekly Sabbaths) were part of every feast. Sabbaths are so central to an appreciation of the feasts that it warrants listing several verses about them:

Passover/Unleavened Bread/Firstfruits: *“On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. [...] And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work” (Lev. 23:7, 8).*

Weeks/Pentecost: *“On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work” (Lev. 23:21).*

Trumpets: *“On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work” (Lev. 23:24, 25).*

The Day of Atonement: *“Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God. [...] I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day. You shall do no work at all. [...] It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves” (Lev. 23:28, 30-32).*

Tabernacles: *“The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work...and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work” (Lev. 23:35, 36).*

In the feasts, we have seen that Christ completed God’s work. Rest is the proper response to completion. When a task is finished, we rest. Hebrews tells us that those who believe the gospel of Jesus Christ enter into God’s Sabbath rest, where His work is finished (Heb. 4:2-4, 9, 10). The verses above show that we can do no work in Christ. More than that,

the warning for the Day of Atonement shows that if we work and reject the Sabbath of Christ, we will earn judgment instead of salvation. From Christ's death (Passover) to His anointing (Pentecost) to His indwelling/completion (Tabernacles), the work is Christ's and Christ's alone. We cannot add to it or assist Him. We can only rest in what Jesus has done. Isaiah picks up the spirit of this when he writes, "Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil" (Isaiah 56:2). To keep the Sabbath is to approach God knowing that apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5).

This isn't to say that Christians should lay around doing nothing. Living in the Sabbath of Christ isn't about our activity level. It is about the source of our activity, our principle of motivation. Think of how busy Jesus was during His earthly ministry. Scripture records times when He was physically exhausted, had no time to eat, and was interrupted when He finally had some time by Himself to pray (John 4:6; Mark 6:31; Mark 1:35-37). Jesus explained His amazing amount of activity this way: "...it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:10). Although He was constantly doing things He was at rest, living in the Sabbath of His Father. What about Paul? His unending labor for the church included everything from going without food and sleep to being stoned and even shipwrecked (2 Cor. 11:23-29). His secret? "I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully energizes me" (Col. 1:29). Energized by Christ, Paul rested in the midst of ongoing ministry.

The Root and Foundation

Sacrifice, of some kind, was required with the observance of every feast under the old covenant. The types and amounts of animals varied from feast to feast but generally there was a burnt offering and a sin offering. The main purpose of a burnt offering was to be "an aroma pleasing to the LORD" (Lev. 1:9, 13, 17). For this offering, the entire animal was burned on the altar. The sin offering was made to make atonement for the people (Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35). These offerings had to be made during every feast because of Israel's continuing sinfulness. They could not relate to God or participate in His feasts unless sin was acknowledged and dealt with.

Jesus's one sacrifice was, as we have seen, sufficient for all time and beyond. On the cross He fulfilled every burnt offering and sin offering pictured in the Old Testament. In Him, there is no need for repeated sacrifice. Why then is the cross pictured at every feast through the offerings that were commanded? It is because our participation in any aspect of Christ depends on the cross. We can only be united to His resurrection if we are united to His death (Rom. 6:5). Sharing His anointing depends on His atonement. And God couldn't tabernacle or dwell in us unless His temple was destroyed and raised in three days (John 2:19-22).

It isn't just that the cross is a first step that we have to start with. We cannot move on from the cross any more that a tree can move from its root or a building from its foundation. This is why, even in the type, the Lord keeps the cross continually before us. It is as if He is saying, "If I hadn't died you would have no part in me" (cf. John 13:8).

Since the cross is the bedrock of all God has done, we must keep our feet on the ground of it, especially as we know Jesus in the more exalted aspects of His life. Christ, our risen, anointed King still has His wounds. The Holy Spirit must mark us with the cross in such a way that we never leave the wounds of Christ, even as we experience the freedom of His resurrection, the power of His anointing, the authority of His crown. In fact, we must see His wounds as the

source of everything else that we experience in Him and learn to value them as the headwaters of spiritual life. If the cross is not ever before us and hasn't indelibly marked our hearts, we will have a false sense of where God's life, power, authority, and blessing come from. We will think these divine things come because we are spiritual, and because God is rewarding us for "doing it right." But if we experience any spiritual life and power, it is only because we are in Christ who died on the cross to make our participation possible.

Life Cycle

Just as holy-days (from which we derive the word "holidays") give the passage of time a sense of rhythm and progression, so the feasts imply that spiritual life is rhythmic and progressive as well. Israel celebrated her feasts annually, suggesting that our participation in Christ follows a cyclic pattern. Since we are in Jesus, the Holy Spirit shapes our lives according to His death, burial, resurrection, anointing, kingship, priesthood, and indwelling/completion. To say it another way, the pattern of Christ's life as laid out in the feasts is reproduced in us. Spiritually and inwardly, we go through the feasts over and over. Each time we do, our participation with Jesus deepens, and we reflect His image more clearly.

Of course, our movement through the various feasts of Christ isn't dictated by time as under the old covenant; it is dictated by the Spirit, who institutes and turns seasons so as to best cultivate Christ in us. If need be, He can make the sun stand still until we are conformed to Christ in the way represented by a particular feast (cf. Joshua 10:12, 13). Or, He can make seasons overtake each other so that they happen almost simultaneously (cf. Amos 9:13).

As the Spirit moves us through the feasts of Christ, we may or may not know which feast-time we are in; we may not have an exact sense of how we are learning Christ. Knowing which feast of Christ we are conforming to can be helpful but it isn't required. We are His workmanship (Eph. 2:10). We need not always understand how God is shaping us. We just need to trust that His love and goodness are governing the process.

Christ Increasing

Besides being tied to her calendar year, we have seen that the feasts were connected to Israel's agricultural seasons as well. Passover and Unleavened Bread (Christ's death and burial) are given no agricultural significance in the Old Testament. But Jesus connected them to planting seed when He compared His death and burial to a seed falling into the ground and bringing forth a harvest (John 12:24). From the planting of the cross all the way through to the complete harvest of Tabernacles, the feasts show us Christ increasing:

This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come (Mark 4:26-29).

Here we have, condensed in a parable, the same seed-to-harvest growth pattern represented in the feasts. This certainly gives a panoramic view of God's plan from inception to fullness but it can be applied at countless other levels. When God addresses specific issues in our lives, for instance, He starts with the seed of Christ's death and burial as it relates to that issue. Christ then grows within (though we do not know how). He increases from the Firstfruits to the partial

harvest of Pentecost to the full harvest of Tabernacles. The writer of Hebrews intimates this pattern when He says, “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11). When the Holy Spirit orchestrates things so that we experience some aspect of Christ’s suffering and death it is painful discipline (Heb. 12:2-7). But its purpose is to plant the seeds of righteousness and peace. As these grow within, they supplant the thorns and thistles of the fall that once overran our souls (Gen. 3:17, 18).

Pilgrim’s Progress

All seven feasts are described as “sacred assemblies” (Lev. 23:2). To be part of the feast, people had to gather where it was happening. Christ, too, is a sacred assembly. We are gathered into Him. What is true of Him is true of us. We are dead in Christ, buried in Christ, raised in Christ, anointed in Christ, crowned in Christ, priests in Christ, and God’s dwelling in Christ.

The Hebrew word for feast is “hag” (pronounced “hog”) (Lev. 23:6, 34). “Hag” refers especially to feasts or festivals involving a pilgrimage. People left their homes, friends and family, livelihood—everything that was their life—to be part of the feast. Being gathered into Christ also involves pilgrimage. Scripture shows that coming to Jesus means leaving who we are. Oftentimes, family members and friends choose not to join us on our pilgrimage to know Jesus. Relationships change or are left behind. Following Jesus may mean giving up occupations, hobbies, and other ways we spent time in the world. Or, God may call us to move from the place we have lived so we can serve Him somewhere else.

Pilgrimage is a lifelong feature of the Christian life. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit takes us through the feasts of Christ over and over. This means throughout life we leave attitudes, behaviors, people, places, ideologies, or activities so we can feast more fully in Christ. Consider the disciples: Peter left his fishing business and entered full-time ministry. He also changed from an impulsive, wavering person to a “rock” who helped lead the early church (Matt. 16:18). John was nicknamed “son of thunder.” He was one of those that asked to call fire down on the Samaritans when they wouldn’t let Jesus pass through their village. But now he is known as “the disciple of love” because his writings speak so much of God’s love. Simon was a political activist who belonged to an anti-Roman group known as the Zealots. He had to choose between his political ideals and following Jesus. Last but not least is Paul, who said: “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ” (Php. 3:8). This is the pilgrim attitude.

Does being a Christian mean a life of loss upon loss? Not at all. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life” (Luke 18:29, 30). Whatever we leave behind is redeemed, replaced, or resurrected as we feast in Jesus. So if you hoped to achieve great things in music, you may still do music—as a volunteer worship-leader in a small church. If following Jesus alienated you from your family, God may provide deeply meaningful connections with a church family. Or, He may save members of your family so that you’re not only related by blood but by the blood of Jesus! A desire to pastor may be lived out in a financial planning office instead of a church office. And a closed womb may mean a heart open to adoption. When God says, “I am making everything new!” we are leaving death, mourning, crying, pain, and the old order of life without God (Rev.

21:4, 5). It is hard to see this when we are talking about walking away from everything we have known. Surely, this is how the Israelites felt as they left Egypt. But the well-watered land of Canaan—rich with fruit, milk, and honey—caused the memory of Egypt to fade. In the same way, we will find the feast of Jesus so satisfying that whatever we have left behind will seem like famine in comparison.

Conclusion

Israel's feasts give us an expanded view of Christ, who died, was buried, and was raised. Such an expanded view allows the many facets of Christ to reflect their spiritual light for our consideration. Passover and the Day of Atonement, for instance, bring out different dimensions of the cross: it is at once the fullness of God's judgment (on Adam, the world, and the devil) as well as the fullness of His reconciliation (through Christ's sin offering and shed blood). Christ's resurrection is enriched as we learn new life is also anointing, coronation, priesthood, and indwelling. What a blessed fullness this brings to knowing Jesus!

Also glimpsed in the feasts are the macro and micro levels of God's activity. Christ encompasses the whole of divine activity, from cross to completion. But He is also the cycle of spiritual life in the heart of each believer. The objective work of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is also the subjective walk of the believer. We are not just dogs eating what falls from the table of Christ (c.f. Mark 7:28). Instead, we are gathered into Him to feast in Him. Jesus said, "The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56). In other words, by a miracle of the Holy Spirit, we are integrated with Him; our experience merges with His. As one monk observed in the 11th century, "He is in my heart, he is in heaven: Both there and here he shows himself to me with equal glory."¹¹

¹¹ Simeon the New Theologian (949-1022).

Israel's Feasts

At a glance...

	Spring Feasts				Fall Feasts		
	Passover	Unleavened Bread	Firstfruits	Weeks/ Pentecost	Trumpets	Day of Atonement	Tabernacles
When	1/14 (March-April)	1/15-22	1/16	3/6 (May-June)	7/1 (Sept.-Oct.)	7/10	7/15-22
Agriculture	Planting		First grain harvested	New Grain			Ingathering of crops
Offering	Lamb or kid	2 bulls, 1 ram, 7 lambs as a burnt offering; 1 goat ¹² + grain offerings	Wave offering of new grain, 1 lamb + grain & drink offerings	Wave offering of 2 loaves of leavened bread; 2 bulls, 1 ram, 7 lambs as a burnt offering; 1 goat, 2 lambs ¹³ + grain & drink offerings	1 bull, 1 ram, 7 lambs as a burnt offering; 1 goat + grain offerings	1 bull, 1 ram, 7 lambs, 1 goat, scapegoat + grain offerings	Days 1-7: x ¹⁴ bulls, 2 rams, 14 lambs, 1 goat + grain offerings Day 8: 1 bull, 1 ram, 7 lambs, 1 goat + grain offerings
Observances	Blood applied to lintel & doorposts	Eating unleavened bread, "the bread of affliction" (Deut. 16).			Blowing of Trumpets	Fasting	Rejoicing before the Lord w/ branches; living in booths
History	Firstborn judged, believers spared	Exodus from Egypt		Giving the law		Nadab & Abihu	Israel lived in tents after leaving Egypt
Fulfillment	Christ's death	Christ's burial	Christ's resurrection	Christ's anointing	Christ's coronation	Christ's high-priestly ministry	Christ's fullness
OT	Ex. 12:1-28, 43-51; 23:4-7; 34:18-28; Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16	Ex. 12:8, 15-16, 17-20, 33-34, 39; 23:4-7; 34:18-28; Lev. 23:4-8; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16	Lev. 23:9-14;	Ex. 19:1-3; 23:14-17; 34:18-28; Lev. 23:15-22; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16	Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6	Lev. 10:1-7; 16; 23:26-32; Num. 29:7-11	Ex. 23:14-17; 34:18-28; Lev. 23:33-44; Numb. 29:12-40; Deut. 16
NT	John 12:24; 1 Cor. 5:7, 8	Matt. 27:62-64; John 12:24 1 Cor. 5:7, 8	1 Cor. 15:20-23	Acts 2:1-4, 30-36		Heb. 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 13:11-13	John 7:2

¹² Goats are always offered as sin offerings.

¹³ The two additional lambs are peace offerings waved before the Lord.

¹⁴ The number of bulls starts at 13 & decreases by 1 each successive day so that by the 7th day 7 bulls are offered.

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