

April 19, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Holy Days

Leviticus 23

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 - The Passover (verses 4-5)
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Every culture has its holidays that it celebrates. Here in the United States, these holidays include Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving and Halloween and New Years. We celebrate Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day and Veterans Day. We celebrate days that celebrate the family, like Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Valentine's Day. We celebrate the birthdays of Martin Luther King Jr. and George Washington. We celebrate the memory of Saint Patrick and Christopher Columbus.

Surely, you might think of some others. Like Groundhog's day, Lincoln's birthday, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, April Fool's Day, May Day, Mardi Gras, VE-Day, Flag Day, The Ides of March. My favorite is "The Longest Day of the Year" Day (June 21).

Certainly, there are other cultures in America who celebrate holidays in our country. Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, Ramadan, Hanukkah, Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Bastille Day.

And there are times when it is difficult to explain our holidays, especially to foreigners. Who exactly is St. Patrick? Why do we look at the shadow of a groundhog on February 2nd? Why do we play tricks on each other on April 1st?

For years, we were involved with a program that brought foreign students into our homes for Thanksgiving. We found it a bit challenging to explain to them exactly what Thanksgiving was. Because, it goes back to the history of our country, to those seeking religious freedom. They came to America, but faced some difficult times. The Pilgrims met an Indian named Squanto, who helped them survive, and helped to bring some peace with the Indians. After several years in America, they celebrated the harvest with a feast, where they gave thanks to the Lord. This feast is what we call Thanksgiving. It's a time when we can give thanks to God for all of the wonderful ways that He has blessed us. And in explaining this holiday, we found it helpful to give them some children's books that explain the holiday.

It's often difficult to understand the fullness of the holidays of foreign nations. I experienced this problem on a few occasions, when I traveled to Nepal. What's Holi about? Where they cover each other with this colored chalk, expecting a blessing from it? What about Tihar? It's a festival of lights, where they make these huge swings out of palm trees for the kids to play in for a week or two? After that time, they take them down. Or Chhath Puja, where they fast all day and bring food offerings down to the river to worship the sun, moon and water gods? What's Lakshmi Puja about? Where they create these ornate designs on the sidewalk just outside their home, with a path leading inside. They hope to draw Lakshmi (goddess of wealth, love and prosperity) into their home for a blessing during the night?

Well, this morning, we have an opportunity to look at the feasts and festivals of a foreign nation. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to open in your Bibles to Leviticus 23. And they can be a bit confusing, if you aren't familiar with the Jewish culture. And what makes it more difficult is that they Jews today have added layers onto their celebrations with traditions. So the holidays they celebrate today are their expression of the Biblical celebrations.

This morning, our hope is to dig into the feasts and look for ways in which they point to Christ. After all, isn't that what much of the book of Leviticus is about? It's about preparing the hearts and minds of the Jewish people for the coming of Jesus, their Messiah.

Anyway, in Leviticus 23, we will see the feasts and festivals that God commanded the Jewish people to observe. You can see the divine origin of these feasts in verses 1 and 2.

Leviticus 23:1-2

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.

Indeed, this is what sets apart Leviticus 23 from all of the holidays that we typically celebrate. Nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to celebrate Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day, Independence Day. Now, that doesn't make them wrong. It's only right to celebrate the coming of God into the world (as we do at Christmastime). It's only right to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead (as we do at

Easter-time). It's only right to set a day apart to give thanks to God. It's only right to take a day to especially honor our mothers and our fathers. It's only right to remember those men who have made an impact upon our nation and its history.

But, all of these holidays are man-made. By contrast, the holidays mentioned here in Leviticus 23 are God-made holidays. You might even call them "Holy Days," as I have in the title of my message.

Let's begin by looking at the first holy day, which is simply ...

1. The Sabbath (verse 3)

Leviticus 23:3

"Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.

These words take us back to the Ten Commandments, given to Moses on Mount Sinai, as recorded in Exodus, chapter 20. But actually, they take us back to creation. Listen carefully to Exodus 20:8-11. This is God to Moses on Mount Sinai, some time before Moses wrote Leviticus.

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

God gave the Sabbath to Israel as a creation ordinance. Just as God worked six days in the creation, so Israel was to work six days in the week. Just as God rested on the seventh day, so Israel was to rest on the seventh day

God gave this command to help His people. God created us. He knows what's good for us. He knows that we should work six days. He knows that we should rest one day.

And I commend a Sabbath to you. I commend both parts. Both the working and the resting.

God made us to work, and we work best when we rest. So, find a rest day. Find a day when you can rest from your labors and rejoice in the LORD's provision that day.

Now, The Sabbath was woven deeply into the fabric of Jewish life. In fact, I would argue, it was woven too deeply! It seems as if all they cared about was how to keep the Sabbath. So that when Jesus came along and began to heal on the Sabbath, the religious leaders became filled with rage! See, they were the Sabbath police, making sure that nobody worked on that day! And when Jesus healed on the Sabbath, or picked grain on the Sabbath, it stirred the religious leaders to great anger.

What they didn't realize was that Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In other words, God didn't create man for the purpose that there would be creatures around who might keep the Sabbath! No, God created man and knew that he needed rest, so He gave him the Sabbath as a gift.

The Sabbath was to be a day of relaxation and celebration! And that's what all of the feasts and festivals are. They are gifts from the hand of God to bless His people! Do you realize this: God has commanded us to rejoice! That's the idea of all of these festivals. God wants His people to be refreshed in Him!

What a good God we serve! He says, "Remember to get your needed rest."

Well, let's look at the feasts. After the Sabbath, God gives Israel seven feasts to keep. They break down into two types: There are Spring Feasts and there are Fall feasts. The Spring Feasts take place in the Spring. The Fall Feasts take place in the Fall.

So, let's start with ...

2. The Spring Feasts

- The Passover (verses 4-5)

The first feast we read about is the Passover. Let's read in verse 4.

Leviticus 23:4-5

"These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the LORD's Passover.

It's right here that we see why we call these feasts, "The Spring Feasts." The Passover is to be celebrated in the first month and on the fourteenth day of the month.

Now, the Jewish calendar is a bit different than our calendar. Their months don't correspond with our months. Neither do they begin when ours begin. In the Jewish calendar, the first month begins in the spring (sometime in March-April).

Today, it's called the month of Nissan. In fact, today is the last day in the month of Nissan. It's Nissan 30th. Back in the days when the Bible was written, they hadn't yet named the months. They simply called the first month, "the first month."

They began the calendar on this day, because, this was the time when Israel was redeemed out of slavery in the land of Egypt. Listen to Exodus 12:1-2

Exodus 12:1-2

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.

And on the tenth day of the month, every family was to take a lamb into their household - without blemish, a year old. And on the fourteenth day of the month, they were to kill the lamb when the sun goes down. And sprinkle the blood of this lamb upon the door frames of their houses.

And as the Angel of the LORD passed through Egypt that night, he killed all of the firstborn in every house, unless, he saw the blood upon the doorposts. In that case, he "Passed-Over" that house. This was what the Passover celebrated. It was the feast that looked back to the time when Israel was rescued out of bondage from Egypt, when God poured out His wrath upon Egypt, with ten devastating plagues. The last of the plagues is called "The Passover."

This was the feast that Jesus celebrated at the Last Supper. And rather than looking back to Egypt, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." And with those words, Jesus identified Himself as our Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

As we believe in Him, it is as if His blood was sprinkled upon our soul, so that when God looks to judge us, He sees the blood and "Passes-Over" our sin. We could go into great depths looking into the wonders of this feast, but, as it is mentioned so quickly, we will go quickly. I simply say this: Let us believe in our Passover lamb! Jesus is our only hope from avoiding God's wrath.

The next feast (which is closely associated with the Passover) is ...

2. The Spring Feasts

- The Passover (verses 4-5)

- Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is so closely related to the Passover that you can almost consider these feasts to be one and the same. The Passover refers to the celebratory feast on the fourteenth day. The Feast of Unleavened bread begins the next day (on the fifteenth day), and continues for seven days. Verses 6-8, ...

Leviticus 23:6-8

And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. But you shall present a food offering to the LORD for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work."

Again, this takes us back to the time when Israel was being rescued out of slavery in Egypt. They left in haste. They didn't have time for the bread to rise. The reason for unleavened bread is given in Deuteronomy 16:3, "Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction--for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste--that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 16:3).

Now, one of the things that I greatly appreciate about the Jewish feasts and festivals is that they have a reason, and they are focused upon remembering the great things that God has done for Israel. And it's especially focused upon the children; how children need to learn everything that God has done for us.

We live in a nation that has a bunch of holidays. But, we often neglect to get the meaning across. Thanksgiving has become "Turkey Day" and football. Christmas has become "Presents." Easter has become bunnies and Easter eggs. Labor Day and Memorial Day become days off, where we spend long weekends. I encourage you to make efforts to remember why we celebrate each of these events. The vast majority of our holidays have a good message to communicate (Halloween being a major exception, of course.).

Take the time with your children to teach them why we celebrate Memorial Day, remembering those who have fallen in was for the freedom of our country. Teach them to give genuine thanks to the Lord during the Thanksgiving weekend. At Christmas time, direct them to Jesus. During Easter, point to our hope in the resurrection of Jesus.

And as the Jewish families would eat of nothing but unleavened bread during that week, it was a great opportunity for them to reflect upon why they are so eating. "Our ancestors ate in haste when they were redeemed from slavery. So, we eat unleavened bread to remember God's great deliverance."

And you can do this easily at your holiday meals. On Mother's Day, go around the table and give some words of honor to your mother. On

Veteran's Day, read of a veteran who made a great sacrifice in serving our nation. What a great way to remember the saving works of God with food.

Let's move on ...

2. The Spring Feasts

- The Passover (verses 4-5)
- Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8)
- Feast of Firstfruits (verses 9-14)

And this is where things get really interesting....

Leviticus 23:9-14

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

This Holy Day is a time of placing trust in the LORD. It was at the very beginning of the harvest. Being in a hot, desert climate, their growing season was during the winter months when it rained. It's a bit like California. Whenever we visit my in-laws in the summer, everything is all brown and withered up. I tell my mother-in-law how brown it always is in California. And she always assures me that it is not the case during the winter months when they get the rain! The growing season (at least without irrigation) is during the winter months.

But, here, the feast of the firstfruits is the beginning of the harvest celebration. They take from the first of the crop (the barley harvest) and offer it to the LORD, trusting that the LORD will be faithful to bring in the full crop later. As such, they take from the sheaf and give it to the priest who waves the offering before the LORD. Later, with the Feast of Weeks, we will see the priest waving two loaves of bread, that is the harvest brought in and fully used. But now, we only see the firstfruits. Just the sheaves.

This act of offering up the first fruits is an expression of trust in the LORD. A few weeks ago, I preached on Proverbs 3:9-10, ...

Proverbs 3:9-10

Honour the Lord with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;
then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.

And this captures the heart of the Feast of the Firstfruits. From the first of the produce, they were honoring the LORD, trusting that He would bring in the full harvest. And when you think about this feast and Jesus, it guides us to the resurrection.

First of all, the date. We see in verse 11 that the sheaf is to be waved "on the day after the Sabbath." Now, there's question as to whether this is talking about the Sabbath rest day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (that is, the 16th day of the first month); or whether this is talking a regular "Sabbath," that is the next Saturday in the month, which would make the next day a Sunday. On some months, this wouldn't make any difference. When Passover fell on a Friday, the Feast of Unleavened Bread beginning on Saturday, a Sabbath day, and when the next day was the "day after the Sabbath," which would be the 16th of the month.

At any rate, this took place when Jesus was crucified. Passover was on Friday, the night Jesus died. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was on Saturday, when Jesus was in the tomb. The Feast of Firstfruits was on a Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead! Indeed, Jesus is our first-fruit. He is the first of a harvest of resurrected souls.

When Jesus rose from the dead, the full harvest wasn't in. But, His resurrection was a pledge of the full harvest. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he used the language of first fruits to describe Jesus rising from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

Jesus, if you will, is the first of the harvest. And we trust that the LORD will make us alive at His coming, when He brings in the full harvest of souls. How appropriate that most churches across the world meet on Sunday, the day of the resurrection! The day of the resurrection of Jesus!

I do believe that this feast is picturing and anticipating the resurrection of Jesus. As Paul says in Colossians 1:18, "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead."

Let's move on, ...

2. The Spring Feasts

- The Passover (verses 4-5)
- Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8)
- Feast of Firstfruits (verses 9-14)
- Feast of Weeks (verses 15-22)

Verse 15, ...

Leviticus 23:15-22

"You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD. And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God."

In verse 17, you see what I mentioned earlier about the waving of the two loaves. That is, all of the harvest has come in, and they are now offering up in thanksgiving to God the full-fruit of the harvest. This is the fine flour and the leaven, waved before the LORD. This is the wheat harvest, which matures later than does the barley of the feast of firstfruits.

And as a note here in verse 22, the full harvest doesn't mean that every last stalk in the field has been brought in. No, some has been left to provide for the poor who would go out and glean from what was remaining. But, I want to direct you attention this morning to verses 15 and 16, ...

Leviticus 23:15-16

"You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD.

There is a counting that is going on here, which is not unlike what we often do in our house (and perhaps you do in yours). In order to build up anticipation for our vacation time, we often build a paper chain, consisting of dates, counting down until we leave on our summer trip to California (where we will see the brown). Each day, we take off one of the links of the chain, until the final day, when only one link is left -- we leave tomorrow!

This is very similar to what God was telling Israel. From the Feast of Firstfruits, begin counting. Count seven full weeks -- from one Sunday to another Sunday (the day after the Sabbath). When you count the days on the end, you come up with fifty days. What happened fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead? Pentecost! Pentecost literally means "fiftieth." That is, the fiftieth day after the Feast of Firstfruits.

Acts 2 records the story of how on this day, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and filled them with "other tongues", and they spoke languages that they didn't even know! And the crowds heard it and were amazed that everyone was speaking in their own languages of the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11).

Peter then stood up and preached how this was a fulfillment of Joel, chapter 2. And what happened? A harvest of people came into the kingdom! Three thousand people repented of their sin and were saved that day! (Acts 2:41).

And what begun on that day has continued ever since. God has faithfully called people to Himself. Many have come to faith in Christ. He has built His church, which went from a dozen disciples to the untold millions around the globe today who have trusted in Jesus.

Now, what I find amazing is that the disciples didn't really see what was happening. If they were good Jews, they were counting the days until the "fiftieth" day. Jesus had been with them for forty days after His resurrection. He had promised that the Holy Spirit would come to them. Acts 1:5 says, "John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." And when the Holy Spirit did, they would receive great power. Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). But, until that day, they were to wait in Jerusalem and pray (Acts 4).

So, picture this. They are counting down 50 days. Jesus had been with them 40 days. When Jesus left, there were 10 days left on their paper-chain. He said, "The Holy Spirit is coming not many days from now." If they had put two and two together, perhaps they could have

anticipated the day when Holy Spirit would come! It would come when the paper-chain was down to zero! Now, with hindsight, it's easy to see the connection with Pentecost. And I don't blame them for not quite getting it right.

But, how clear are the first four feasts to us. The Passover (verses 4-5) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8) describe Jesus, dying as the lamb of God. The Feast of Firstfruits (verses 9-14) tells of the resurrection of Christ. Feast of Weeks (verses 15-22) tells of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Such is the purpose of the Spring Feasts. They tell us of the first coming of Jesus. And in many ways, I believe that the Fall Feasts tell us of the second coming of Jesus, at least in part. It's not exact, but there's enough to lead us there.

So, let's move on to the Fall Feasts. Now, with these it's a bit more difficult. The first fall feast is ...

3. The Fall Feasts

- Feast of Trumpets (verses 23-25)

Verse 23, ...

Leviticus 23:23-25

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD."

You can see in verse 24 how it is called a "Fall Feast," as we find ourselves in the seventh month, on the first day of the month. Again, the Jewish calendar begins in the Springtime. Six months later, we find ourselves in the Fall, which is the seventh month, which takes us to the September/October timeframe. Today, the Jews call this month Tishri. But, of course in the days of Moses, it was called, "the seventh month."

And on the first day of the month, we have The Feast of Trumpets. Often, this is called Rosh Hashanah, which means "The Head of the Year," or "New Year." At first blush, you might say that this should be on the first month. But, that's not the way that the Jewish calendar works. Much like corporations in America have a fiscal year, which begins in April or May or October, so also does the Jewish calendar have a new year in the seventh month. You might think of it like this: The religious year begins with the Passover. The agricultural year begins with The Feast of Trumpets.

Anyway, on this day, trumpets are blown. It begins a several week progression of sorrow and then rejoicing! Sorrow for sin (verse 27), and rejoicing in the LORD (verse 40). On this particular day, it officially brings in the New Year. And with it comes the celebration and anticipation of God's provision in the year to come. It's a bit like the falling of the ball on Times Square in New York. Let the celebration begin.

Now, when we think about trumpets, we think about a summons. In ancient Israel, trumpets had two purposes. They would be used to call a solemn assembly, where the people would be summoned into God's presence for worship, such as when the people were gathered together at the base of Mount Sinai. When the trumpet would blow, the people should come up to the mountain to consecrate the people (Exodus 19:13-14). They would also be used to gather Israel for war, such as Joshua used at Jericho or Gideon when he battled the Midianites.

In the New Testament, however, the trumpets are primarily used to signal the return of Jesus. "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16). At the blowing of the trumpets in Revelation 8-9, we see judgment coming with the return of Christ. "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever'" (Revelation 11:15). And in 1 Corinthians, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:42).

Perhaps the feast of trumpets has an allusion to this final day. Perhaps it's merely a celebration of the New Year. I don't know.

Let's move on, ...

3. The Fall Feasts

- Feast of Trumpets (verses 23-25)

- Day of Atonement (verses 26-32)

Leviticus 23:26-32

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD. And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath."

When we were in Leviticus 16, we looked extensively at this day. The Day of Days, when the Priest of Priests would enter the Holy of Holies to offer up the Sacrifices of Sacrifices. As such, I don't think that we need to spend too much time thinking through the details again. But, only to mention that this clearly anticipates the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross. The book of Hebrews makes this clear.

And we look back to the Day of Atonement when Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins! Once for all, His sacrifice was entirely sufficient to pay the penalty for our sins! We no longer need the blood of bulls and goats, which could never take away sins forever. But Jesus did! His sacrifice has removed our sins far from us. His sacrifice dealt with our sins once and for all.

But, might there be another anticipation this feast? Of all the feasts, this is the only one with sorrow. All of the other feasts are joyful, but not this one. "... you shall afflict yourselves and present a food offering to the LORD" (Leviticus 23:27). "For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people" (Leviticus 23:29). "It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves" (Leviticus 23:32).

Affliction describes repentance and sorrow for sin. The Day of Atonement is a day of agony, a day when our sin is dealt with. And of all these feasts, this is the only one with a warning, ...

Leviticus 23:30

And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people.

Doing work on the Day of Atonement would trivialize the importance of the day. And if the Feast of Trumpets has allusion to the return of Christ, might not the Day of Atonement have allusion to the final judgment? That day when sin is finally dealt with and finally judged!

There is no more serious and somber day than judgment day. Where all will stand before Christ. If your name is in the book, you will go to life. If your name is not in the book, you will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). And the only way that you will ever escape judgment on that day is if you have trusted in the Day of Atonement, not the slaughter of bulls and goats, but the slaughter of Jesus Christ.

And at the judgment, I'm sure that there will be talk of what Christ has done for sinners, as those who trusted in Christ will plead His merits, not their own. And so, I submit to you, the Day of Atonement may have allusion to the final day of judgment. A most serious and somber day.

We come to our final point this morning, ...

3. The Fall Feasts

- Feast of Trumpets (verses 23-25)
- Day of Atonement (verses 26-32)
- Feast of Booths (verses 33-44)

Leviticus 23:33-44

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.

"These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, besides the LORD's Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD.

Of all the feasts, this seems to be the most celebratory. It's a seven-day feast (verse 34, 39). In fact, in verse 40, the LORD says, "You shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days." I think that it would have been especially enjoyable for children to celebrate, as they would live in "booths" or "tents" for these seven days (verse 42). They did this to remember how the Jews lived in booths when they were in the wilderness, after their redemption.

And I can't help but focus upon the celebration aspect of this feast! If, indeed, these Fall Feasts allude to future events, we can easily think of the how the joy in the celebration of the feast of booths is similar to the joy of being in God's Kingdom forever.

In Revelation, it's described as a "wedding feast" (the marriage supper of the lamb). Perhaps this feast will direct our hearts where there isn't merely a seven-day feast, but a seven-million day feast, where we feast in joy, because we have been redeemed from our sins!

Could the Fall Feasts allude to the second coming of Christ? Perhaps. Perhaps not. I'm not holding to this very tightly as it is all speculation. However, once the second coming arrives and we are in the eternal state, all will be made clear and my hunch will be proved right or wrong. But by then, it won't very much matter to us.

Well, I must conclude my message in Colossians, chapter 2. Because, a burning question that you might be having is this: If, indeed, these are God's Holy Days, should we not keep them? Should we not be feasting in this way? The simple answer to that question is this: You are free to do so, but you are not bound to do so.

See, when the gospel came into the world, salvation was extended to the Gentiles. And the big question that was dealt with in the first counsel of the early church was this: Do we compel the Gentiles who believe in Jesus to submit themselves to the law, particularly, with regard to circumcision? And the emphatic response of the apostles was, "No! If you bind others to keep circumcision, then you bind them to keep the entire law, and this is not the gospel!"

And the same would be true of feasts and festivals. When Gentiles came to Christ, were they required to keep the Jewish Feasts and Festivals? The apostles would answer a resounding, "No!"

Now, that doesn't mean that Jews should have stopped participating in some of these feasts. These feasts were all a part of their culture! Those Jews who believed were not called to abandon their culture. Paul was eager to get back to Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). But, when Christianity spread throughout the world, it didn't come with the baggage of the Jewish culture!

But, as is our natural tendency, what we do and enjoy, we want others to do and enjoy. And this will bring with it a tendency to push others into your preferences. Paul addresses this issue head on in Colossians 2.

Col 2:16-23

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations -- "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

Paul argues in the book of Colossians that we are complete in Christ, and that we need no further rituals or feasts to make us any better. And so, when it comes to celebrating the Jewish feasts and festivals, you are free to do so, but you are not bound to do so. But, in doing, I'm sure that you will find some very encouraging things for your soul.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on April 19, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
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