

The Seven Biblical Feasts

The Seven Biblical Feasts

Good morning, saints!

Today is our 35th and last session in the Book of Numbers. I want to wrap up with a brief overview of the SEVEN Feasts of the Lord mentioned in Chapters 28–29. Now, Chapters 28–29 of Numbers describe the details of the *sacrifices* that are to be offered on each of the festivals – I’m not going to get into *those* details today. However, I think it is a good time to briefly discuss these seven important festivals as regards their TIMING and SIGNIFICANCE on the Hebrew calendar. We’re coming up on the Christian celebration of Easter – which, as you know, happened on the weekend of the Passover.

The seven Biblical feasts were given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai and are contained in the Book of Leviticus (Vayikra), Chapter 23:

<SLIDE> Leviticus 23: Verses 1–2:

“And **Adonai** spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: These are the appointed festivals of the Lord that you shall proclaim as holy convocations, my appointed festivals.”

And then the text goes on to detail SEVEN sacred assemblies.

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- Please note that Moses did NOT establish these festivals – God did. He called them *holy CONVOICATIONS*, His appointed festivals.

<SLIDE> SHADOW

Now, the apostle Paul wrote to the Gentile believers in Colossae that the feasts of the Lord, the new moon, and the Sabbath days were a SHADOW OF THINGS to come to teach us about the Messiah:

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; *the reality, however, is found in Christ.*”

Colossians 2:16–17

So – our salvation IN NO WAY depends upon our following these feasts. But thither implication of this is often ignored – the fact that they were *shadows* means that they were PROPHETIC.

- They were not just occasions to get together and watch fireworks and hot dogs.

Where this concerns us today is that, of the seven appointed festivals, three were already fulfilled by Christ’s death, burial and

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resurrection; and one was fulfilled by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

- **THAT LEAVES THREE IN OUR FUTURE.**

<SLIDE> OH NO! (YAWN)

Oh No! (Yawn). Information on holidays and feast days we don't celebrate? Who wants to hear that?

This is probably the most common reaction among Christians to *any* presentation on the topic of the feasts. Another common reaction among Christians is “*I hope he's not going to try to get us to follow these feasts.*” And, prior to my study of the topic, I have to admit that I also was definitely in that camp! But, my opinion has radically changed as to their significance– and be at ease, like I said: I am *not* going to say that you are required to follow these feasts.

But, I believe that the attitude of the Christian church as a whole needs to change toward these feasts. This change in opinion on my part started because of one particular word in the text. The meaning of the Hebrew word for *CONVOCAATION*.

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<SLIDE> MIQRA

The Hebrew term translated as ‘convocation’ in Leviticus 23 is ‘miqra’ (mik-raw).

Strong’s Concordance translates the word as describing something ‘called out’, i.e. a public meeting (the act, the persons, or the place); also it used in describing a rehearsal¹.

- ‘Mikra’ defines an assembly of people, one of the main purposes of assembling being to **REHEARSE**.

God’s festivals are REHEARSALS. These Feasts are all connected; they are a series of Feasts, each one playing its role in an overall picture or play. They are like holding yearly rehearsals with God – they were teachings tools meant to prepare His people to celebrate the fulfillment of each festival, at some time in the future. Again, they were prophetic in nature!

What was He preparing the Israelites for? The Messiah’s coming, His death for sin, His resurrection, the birth of the Church, and then the events that will take place at Jesus’ 2nd Coming.

- **They’re about Jesus – yesterday, today and in the future!**

¹ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990, definition 4744.

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That's where WE come in. The first FOUR have been fulfilled, and the last three festivals WILL be fulfilled – and their prophetic message is about the last days and Christ's return.

- **SO, YOU AND I ARE LIVING – IN HISTORY – BETWEEN FESTIVALS.** I'd say that this makes them important information!

So, as we begin to look at some of these Festivals, also called Appointed Times in Holy Scripture, we MUST remember that these were NOT man-established events. God Himself specifically ordered them to be observed and He called them HIS appointed festivals.

And we don't see them just in the OT – the New Testament talks about these Festivals. Every time we find Jesus either in, or on his way to, Jerusalem, it was for the purpose of His PERSONAL participation in one of these Appointed Times. Jesus observed of every one of these Biblical Festivals.

<SLIDE> Here are the seven specific *appointed festivals* identified in Leviticus and Numbers: <seven clicks>

1. Passover (Pesach)
2. Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzoh)
3. First Fruits (Yom HaBikkurim)
(*in the month of Nisan*)

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4. Pentecost (Shavu'ot)
5. Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah) – literally means *a day of blowing the trumpet*.
6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and
7. The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot)
(*in the month of Tishrei*)

The Lord kept every one of them without fail, even celebrating Passover on the night before He died. Believers in Christ are not responsible to keep these feasts, of course, but a knowledge of them greatly enhances their faith.

<click> We better know the feast of Weeks ('Shavout' in Hebrew) as Pentecost. It occurs exactly 50 days after Firstfruits.

<click> And also may know that the modern name of the Feast of Trumpets (#5) is Rosh Hashanah, or *Jewish New Year*. It occurs in the month of Tishrei in the September/October timeframe.

- Rosh Hashanah is also known as the birthday of the world since the Jewish tradition believes that the world was created on this day.²

² Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 11a

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Tishrei is the first month on any Jewish CIVIL calendar, but in the Torah we see that it is referred to consistently as the 7th month, not the first.

<click> Of the seven festivals, three were considered MANDATORY Pilgrimage Feasts³:

- #2 Unleavened Bread
- #4 Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and
- #7 Feast of Tabernacles.

Every able-bodied Jewish males in biblical times had to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem⁴ three time a year to attend the feasts and offer sacrifices.⁵ Attendance was optional for women.⁶

There are other celebrations on the Jewish calendar, but which are not specified Leviticus 23: example: Hanukkah (which Jesus DID celebrate), the festival of Purim, and so on. However, these seven were paramount.

SLIDE: NISAN IS THE FIRST MONTH

In Exodus 12, it says:

³ Deuteronomy 16:16-17, 2 Chronicles 8:13

⁴ Generalized statement. Deuteronomy 16:16-17 actually says: "Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses." Prior to the 1st temple being built in Jerusalem, that place could be anywhere in Israel where the Tabernacle was located (e.g.; Shiloh and Gibeon).

⁵ There are some indications that, by Jesus' time, the three-time-a-year requirement had been lessened. The Twelve-Year-Old Jesus Goes to the Temple, Bible Gateway Commentary on Luke 2,

⁶ Mishnah says, "All are under obligation, to appear, except minors, women, the blind, the lame, the aged, and one who is ill physically or mentally."

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“Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, “This month **shall be** the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you.” Exodus 12:1-2

God was talking to Moses just prior to the beginning of the Exodus and the death of the 1st borns. This was in the month of Nisan, so God intended Nisan to be the first month of the year.

But, if Nisan is the FIRST month, you might think that the 1st of Nisan is considered to be New Year’s Day.

- In other words, just as January is the first month of our year, we celebrate New Year’s Day on January 1st.

<click> But, as I mentioned, Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year, which literally means “*head of the year*”, and this occurs in the month of **Tishrei**, which is the 7th month of the year – in the Fall of the year – in September/October. Is this confusing?

Well, no more than *our* calendars.

SLIDE: YEARLY CONFUSION

The Hebrew calendar has two types of years: the RELIGIOUS calendar which begins on the 1st of Nisan (in the Springtime) and the CIVIL calendar begins on the 1st of Tishrei (in the Fall).

Confusing? Well, not as much as you might think. Think about how we do it. Our calendar begins with January 1 and ends on December 31st. But, if you have a business or organization that

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deals with money, you also have what is called a *fiscal year*, which can start in any month you choose. A Fiscal year is primarily for the purposes of taxation and accounting.

- NYS: April 1 – March 31
- CCC: April 1 – March 31
- Federal Gov: October 1 – September 30

And then, we have the school year can vary from institution to institution; Ichabod Crane's school year begins on September 8th, Chatham's school year begins September 9th. Even though we have a variety of different years going on at the same time, we generally are able to cope with them. The same is true of the Hebrew calendars.

So, the takeaway is just to understand that there are two types of Hebrew calendars (actually more than two), and the month of Nisan begins the religious calendar upon which all seven special festivals are determined.

<SLIDE:> ESTABLISHING PASSOVER

(READ) In **the first month (Nisan)**, on the **fourteenth day** of the month, at twilight, is a Passover offering to the Lord." Leviticus 23:5

God established that Passover MUST be celebrated on the 14th of Nisan.

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SLIDE: There were three festivals that occurred in the month of Nisan:

He went on to establish the dates of all the other festivals.

Here are the three festivals that occur in the spring:

- Passover: 14th of Nisan
- Unleavened Bread: 15th – 22nd of Nisan, and
- Firstfruits (Bikkurim): 16th of Nisan.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread MUST be celebrated beginning the 15th of Nisan, Firstfruits on the 16th, and so on for the other four festivals.

- **Passover – the 14th of Nisan – is the linchpin date. All the God-Mandated Festivals depend on the identification of Nisan 14th for calculating their mandated start.**

OK – you might say “so what?” Perhaps interesting for winning trivia questions, but why should we be aware of this?

Well, to begin with, **Jesus died on Passover, the 14th of Nisan,** and I think it is worthwhile to know a bit about how it is determined and **WHY** Jesus died on the day when the 14th of Nisan was a **FRIDAY.**

You see, the 14th of Nisan can fall on ANY DAY of the week, just like January 1st. This year, January 1st fell on a Friday; next year

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it falls on a Sunday and the year after on a Monday. So, was it a random occurrence – just mere chance – that Passover was on a Friday that year? Would it been just as well if he died on a Thursday, or a Monday?

- Isn't the important thing was THAT He died? Of course!!!
- Did it matter on WHAT day He died? Yes, in order to fulfill the Torah and give us confidence in ALL His promises!

SLIDE: PASSOVER: 2016

You may be aware that the Christian date for Passover (Good Friday) is quite different this year that the Jewish date.

Christians will commemorate Passover/Good Friday on **March 25th** this year. Remember – Passover, according to the Torah, is to be on the 14th of Nisan when the lambs were slain. However, the 14th of Nisan, on the Jewish calendar this year, is **April 22nd** – which is approximately 28 days later.

<Click> March 25th is actually the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Adar II, not the 14th day of the month of Nisan, the date that God says MUST be Passover day.

What's going on?

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SLIDE: LUNAR VS SOLAR

The Hebrew calendar is based on the **phases of the moon**. It is a LUNAR calendar.

Each month in a lunar calendar begins with a new moon (not the full moon that might keep us awake at night; it is the 1st phase when the moon is dark and just coming out of the earth's shadow).

Since a lunar month runs approximately 29 ½ days, the Hebrew calendar year of 12 lunar months amounts to only **354** days compared to the **365 ¼** days of our solar calendar. Thus, there is an **11 day shortfall that occurs each year!**

- This means that Nisan 14th – Passover – would come 11 days earlier each year! If the 14th of Nisan fell on April 1st this year, next year it would be 11 days earlier – March 21st, and the following year March 10th, and eventually you would end up back in the wintertime. But Passover is to be a Springtime festival to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt.

What to do? Obviously, the easiest thing to do is to occasionally add some extra days to the calendar, just as we do (did) this year with February 29th. However, we're not talking about a ¼ day annual lag, we're talking about an annual **11 day lag**. So, the solution is to add an **entire month** every few years to the calendar – a **leap month** – to bring the calendar back into relative

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alignment with the actual solar cycle for springtime. This additional month – a **leap month** – is added every two – three years.⁷

But – *WHERE* do you add it? Since God specified that that the last three festivals are to occur in the **7TH MONTH** (Tishri)⁸ and that has to be in the autumn, you can't add a month *after* Nisan, because then Tishri would be the 8th month, not the 7th. Therefore, you have to add the month sometime **BEFORE Nisan**.

SLIDE: ADAR I

The last month of the regular Hebrew calendar is named *Adar*. <click> When a leap month is added, it is added before the normal month of *Adar*. Unlike a February 29th day is added to the *end* of the month, the month of *Adar I* is inserted **before** the regular *Adar*.⁹ The regular 12th month – which is normally called **Adad** – becomes **Adar II**, the 13th month.

This leap month plays out this year.

- But, you would think that the Jewish calendar should determine when Passover is, since it is a Jewish festival.
- But... not in the Christian church.

⁷ A leap year on the Jewish calendar occurs 7 times in a 19-year cycle: years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17 and 19.

⁸ Leviticus 23: 23, 26, 33

⁹ *Ritual tradition and Innovation*, Essence of Adar II, <http://www.ritualwell.org/ritual/essence-adar-ii>; http://www.chabad.org/thejewishwoman/roshchodesh_cdo/aid/2263483/jewish/Adar-II.htm

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Because the Christian Church, at the **First Council of Nicaea (325 AD)**, believed that the Hebrew lunar calendar was too disorderly and was causing confusion. Furthermore, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus was resurrected on the **first day of the week, Sunday**.¹⁰ Therefore the Church council decreed that Sunday was the day to celebrate the Resurrection. But, what Sunday? It was – and is today – the **first Sunday** after the **first full moon** that occurs on or after the **spring equinox** (March 21). It was separated from the Jewish calendar, although the full moon characteristic is similar.

<SLIDE> You can see here on the calendar that this year (2016) shows than an extra leap month has been added to the Hebrew (Adar II indicates this), and this explains the 30-day difference in dates.

<SLIDE> In 2017, THIS ADJUSTMENT WILL BRING the two dates into better compatibility, as the date for Passover (Good Friday) on the Gregorian calendar will be April 14th, and on the Hebrew calendar, it will be on April 10th.

So, we Protestants celebrate Easter according to the protocol established by the Church rather than according to the Hebrew calendar. Wrong??? If Christ had NOT come, it would be definitely wrong – any person who did not follow the Biblical schedule was cut off from the people of Israel.

¹⁰ Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19

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- Now, there is *no such penalty* because Christ has come and fulfilled Passover. But, there is also *no great benefit* for following the Church's schedule either. So, why not follow the Jewish calendar?

A question that frequently arises is whether or not to use the word “*Easter*”. As you may know, we here at CCC often refer to the day of Christ's resurrection as *Resurrection Sunday*, rather than the traditional title of “Easter Sunday”, because some say that it is of pagan origin. And, we're not the only church that does so. *Is* the name ‘Easter’ of Pagan Origin?

SLIDE: THE NAME ‘EASTER’ IS PAGAN IN ORIGIN?

The reason for this practice is the notion that word “*Easter*” is said to be derived from the Babylonian and Assyrian goddess of fertility and sex *Ishtar*. Her symbols are said to be an egg and bunny. *Easter --- Ishtar ... sounds right.*

- While this claim is made with good intention, it is **historically inaccurate.**

Its name comes from *Eostre* or *Ostara*, a Germanic pagan goddess, the goddess of the dawn—a bringer of light in the Spring. The name is not derived from the Babylonian goddess *Ishtar*.^{11,12}

¹¹ <http://research.uvu.edu/mcdonald/anglo-saxon/paganfestivals/eosturmonath%20festival.html>

¹² Krystal D'Costa, Beyond Ishtar: The Tradition of Eggs at Easter, Scientific American, March 31, 2013.

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Ishtar and Easter appear to be *homophones*: words that may be pronounced similarly, but have different meanings. This is even confirmed in *Snopes.com*.¹³

But still, some word association with a pagan goddess is there – not Babylonian but Germanic. So, is the principle of renaming Easter Sunday still proper? I'll get to that in a minute.

But, I want to talk a bit on how **eggs** because associated with Easter, since it is asserted as part of THE MISTAKEN MYTH THAT EGGS WERE A SYMBOL OF ISHTAR, the Babylonian FERTILITY goddess.

- First of all, Ishtar's symbols were the lion, the gate and the eight-pointed star, NOT eggs.¹⁴
- Secondly, eggs became associated with Easter because of the **Church's season of Lent**.¹⁵ Lent is the 40-day preparatory period beginning on Ash Wednesday that leads up to Easter.¹⁶ This involved fasting and later abstinence from certain foods. As early as 330 AD, church leaders were urging the practice of a fast prior to Easter; the length of that

¹³ Snopes describes itself as “the definitive Internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation.” Don't know about “definitive”, but it is a very good source.

¹⁴ Ibid, Scientific American

¹⁵ Anthony McRoy, Christian History: How the Fast of Lent Gave Us Easter Eggs, Mar 2016

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2010/february/how-fast-of-lent-gave-us-easter-eggs.html>

¹⁶ Actually, Lent is 46 days in Protestantism and 44 days in Catholicism. Sundays are not fast days. Protestants count Holy Saturday as part of the Lenten season, while Catholics count only until part of Good Friday.

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fast varied significantly from place to place and across generations. Only following the Council of Nicea in 325 AD did the length of Lent become fixed at forty days.¹⁷

By the time of the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–74), **eggs, milk, and meat were all forbidden during Lent:** *"Eggs and milk foods are forbidden to those who fast, for as much as they originate from animals that provide us with flesh ... Again the Lenten fast is the most solemn of all, both because it is kept in imitation of Christ, and because it disposes us to celebrate devoutly the mysteries of our redemption. For this reason the eating of flesh meat is forbidden in every fast, while the Lenten fast lays a general prohibition even on eggs and milk foods."*¹⁸

In the pre-refrigeration days of the Middle Ages, it would be difficult to preserve milk and meat products until Easter, but the same was not true of eggs. Eggs, which unlike other foods do not perish quickly and could be hardboiled and preserved. They were therefore a natural way to break the fast on Easter Sunday. Eggs were thus a mainstay of Easter meals, and a prized Easter gift for children and servants.¹⁹

¹⁷ Nicholas V. Russo, The Early History of Lent, The Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, 2013, <http://www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/193181.pdf>

¹⁸ *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas, Second and Revised Edition, 1920*; Article 8. Whether it is fitting that those who fast should be bidden to abstain from flesh meat, eggs, and milk foods? Reply to Objection 3.

¹⁹ Anthony McRoy, Christian History: How the Fast of Lent Gave Us Easter Eggs, *Christianity Today* Mar 2016 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2010/february/how-fast-of-lent-gave-us-easter-eggs.html>

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SLIDE: SEDER PLATE

You may also remember that the Seder plate occupies center stage at the Passover meal. Here you see the Karpas (parsley), the Maror (bitter herbs), the Charoseth (apples, nuts, spices), and the Z'roah (lamb shankbone).

<click> A hard-boiled egg is also included on the Seder Plate, as shown here.

The egg, called the Beitzah, is an intriguing element of the plate. Although no one knows how it came to be placed on the plate, the egg became to Israel another **symbol of sacrifice in place of the slaughtered festival offerings**.

You see, when men attended the required festivals, Scripture required them to bring a sacrifice²⁰ – meat and grain offerings which were called *Chagigah*. The roasted hard-boiled egg has come to symbolize these festival sacrifices – not the Passover lamb (shank bone) – that were once offered in the temple in Jerusalem but which no longer occur because there is no Temple.

In this context, the egg often is a symbol of mourning in Judaism. Eggs are prominently used as part of the first meal eaten by the mourning family on their return from the burial of a

²⁰ http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/2000/jewish/The-Egg.htm

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loved one. This meal, called the *seudat havara'ah* (or “meal of comfort”), is a private meal that is shared among immediate family members. It is provided by friends, family and/or members of the community and typically consists of peeled hard-boiled eggs and some variation of the lentil stew that, according to the Talmud, Jacob was preparing for his father, Isaac, who was *sitting shiva* for his own father, Abraham. These round-shaped foods – the hard-boiled eggs and the lentils – symbolize the cycle of life that never stops and of which suffering and dying form a part ²¹

- Furthermore, just as the eggs and lentils have no mouth, since they are smoothly rounded without any opening, so the mourners must have no mouth and silently accept their loss, realizing that it was the will of God.²²

So, an egg is on the seder plate as a sad reminder of the destruction of the temple.

- **Now, you are an "eggs-pert" on Easter.**

So, we have seen that the name ‘Easter’ is *not* related to Ishtar and neither are eggs. But still – the word *Easter IS*, as a word, probably related to the ancient springtime goddess of the Germans and also possibly of the Saxons. **So, is it proper to use such a word**

²¹ The First Meal, <http://www.shiva.com/learning-center/sitting/first-meal/>

²² *Jewish Mourning - the first Week, The Meal of Condolence*

<http://www.jewish-funeral-guide.com/tradition/condolence-meal.htm>

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that has pagan origins in order to describe such a sacred Christian celebration?

- The answer is simple. **Using it is NOT a problem (UNLESS IT CAUSES A BROTHER TO STUMBLE).**²³

The origin of the word does not mean that the word is bad. If we are to avoid using words of pagan origin, then we *should* be consistent and avoid using such words as:

- Wednesday is named after the Germanic god Woden
- Saturday--the day of Saturn, the ancient god of agriculture
- Thursday--derived from the ancient word Thursdagr, which designated the Norse god Thor from which *Thursday* derives.

So we can see that many everyday words have pagan origins, but we still use them today. It's not bad to use them, and it doesn't mean that if we use a word that originated in a pagan context that we are somehow involved in paganism. Therefore, it is okay to use the word, *Easter*, because we understand it to mean that time of the year when Jesus rose from the dead.²⁴

- However, if **using the word is CAUSES A BROTHER TO STUMBLE, it is to be avoided.**

²³ I Corinthians 8:7-13

²⁴ Is Easter named after Ishtar?, <https://carm.org/is-easter-named-after-ishtar>

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As far as chocolate bunnies? Rabbits themselves are not a kosher food, but many chocolate products are.²⁵

Now – let’s briefly get into the feasts themselves, and I believe that here it really gets interesting.

<SLIDE> PASSOVER WEEK

Three festivals occur during Passover week

1. Passover (14th of Nisan)
2. Feast of Unleavened bread (15th – 22nd of Nisan), and
3. Firstfruits (16th of Nisan).

<click> Passover

The Passover lamb is slain on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan, as per God’s instructions and as was done in Egypt. It recalls the lambs slain on the 14th of Nisan in Egypt and the blood smeared on the doorposts and lintels of the Israelite homes. That night, the Lord passed-over them. Any home that did not have the covering of the Passover lamb’s blood suffered their 1st born to die. Thousands and thousands of Egyptians died that night, and the horror of the event caused Pharaoh to order the Israelites to exit Egypt.

²⁵ <https://www.thehersheycompany.com/our-ingredients/nutrition-information/special-dietary-needs/kosher-products.aspx>

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Now, I mentioned that three of the seven feasts were mandatory – every male that could was required to attend the festival in Jerusalem.

Ironically, *Passover day* itself – the 14th of Nisan – the day that the Passover lambs were slain in the Temple – was itself NOT a required attendance day, but the NEXT day – the start of the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, was.

- Accepting to be covered by the blood of the Lamb is always voluntary.

As a practical matter, since the Passover meal with the unleavened bread was eaten on the 15th of Nisan (a mandatory feast for those who chose the God of Israel), you needed a Passover lamb that had been slain on the 14th. Obviously, most people attended both days. So, these two festivals were often combined in the language by the time of Jesus.

- And even today, Orthodox Jewish community refers to Passover as an *eight-day* feast²⁶.

However, Biblically, the eight-day period technically is two feasts, the first (Passover) is one day (14th), and the next (festival of Unleavened Bread) is for seven days, and a third feast falls within this 8-day timeframe.

²⁶ Passover, http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/default_cdo/aid/109747/jewish/Passover.htm

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As I said, attendance at the feast of unleavened bread was mandatory for men. You may recall a passage from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 2, which speaks to such attendance:

The Boy Jesus at the Temple

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the **Festival of the Passover**. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. **After the festival was over**, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. Luke 2:41-47

So, every year, Jesus and his parents traveled to Jerusalem for this pilgrimage festival, as required by Torah, and they stayed for the entire 8 days.

<click> UNLEAVENED BREAD

The feast of Unleavened Bread. It was on this night at midnight when the 1st born sons were killed by God in Egypt.

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“And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread” Leviticus 23:6

In their Exodus, the Israelites were to bake their bread and get out; they were not to allow to wait so that their bread would rise – grab everything and leave. They had to bake it and go *without allowing any leavening touch the dough* – *without allowing any leavening to go with them.*

God established this festival to commemorate this event. Leaven in the Bible **symbolized** sin and evil – **CORRUPTION**, self-justification, and false pride. Of course, Jesus often warned about the prideful leaven of the Pharisees.²⁷ Paul commented on the feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread by saying:

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (I Corinthians 5:7–8).

The leaven, the sin, is left behind. No decay, no sin, was to accompany Israel into the new life and the new land they had been given.

²⁷ eg,; Matthew 16:6

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<click> BIKKURIM – FIRSTFRUITS

The third festival that occurs within the 8–days of Passover celebration is the feast of Firstfruits, named 'Bikkurim' in Hebrew.

The Lord spoke to Moses: "Speak to the Israelites and tell them, '**When you enter the land** that I am about to give to you and you gather in its harvest, then you must bring the sheaf of the **first portion of your harvest** to the priest, and he must wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for your benefit—on the day after the Sabbath the priest is to wave it... **You must not eat bread, roasted grain, or fresh grain until this very day**, until you bring the offering of your God. This is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all the places where you live."

Leviticus 23:10–11, 14

The feast was to offer thanks to God for the harvest of the land. Of course, this feast had to wait until the Israelites were finally in their land, because that's when they would have crops to harvest. The two main grain crops were wheat and barley, which would be sown sometime in November. Barley was the first to mature, and so the firstfruit sheaf of grain offered on this festival would be barley.

SLIDE: Passover week chart

I want to briefly mention how Passover worked out the week when Jesus died and rose again.

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The Hebrew day is measured differently from ours. We view a day as beginning at midnight and going on to the next midnight.

<click> The Hebrew day (yom) begins at sundown when three stars become visible in the sky. This is based on God's description of a day in Genesis 1:5

"There was evening, and there was morning, marking the first day."

Evening is considered as being between late afternoon and sundown. So, generally speaking, we can think of the Hebrew day as beginning about 6:00 pm.

<click> So, here was the situation at Passover when Jesus died.

The 14th of Nisan began at sundown on Thursday night.

<click> The next day – Friday in our reckoning but still the 14th of Nisan, the Passover lambs were killed at the Temple at about 3:00pm.

<click> Then at 6:00 pm on Friday, the day turns to the 15th of Nisan, the beginning of Unleavened Bread. This goes into Saturday and 6:00pm, and

<click> the 16th feast of firstfruit begins and continues into Sunday.

Here's what happened that that Passover: <clicks>

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- The last supper was eaten the night of the 14th. This was the start of Passover day.
- Jesus was later arrested in the Garden sometime in early morning – still the 14th.
- He went to the cross at about noontime on the 14th – still Passover day, and
- He died at 3:00 in the afternoon²⁸, the exact time when the Passover lambs were being slain in the Temple.
- He was quickly buried because the Sabbath was approaching at 6:00pm, and that year, the Sabbath also happened to fall on the feast of Unleavened Bread.
- Jesus was in the tomb the entire next day (15th), and sometime on the Sunday morning²⁹ – which was now the feast of firstfruits, He arose.

<SLIDE> PENTECOST

Ok – the next – and final feast that I’ll discuss in any detail today is the Feast of Weeks, Shavout in Hebrew. We know it was Pentecost.

²⁸ 9th hour Mark 15:25

²⁹ “Now after the Sabbath, as it *began to dawn* toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave.” Matthew 28:1

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It is the anniversary of the day that God gave the Torah and Commandments to the Israelites on Mt. Sinai. It is called “the festival of weeks” because God commanded that it be celebrated seven weeks (Sabbaths) plus one day following Firstfruits.

It was the SECOND offering of FIRSTFRUITS. The first, you will remember, was the offering of the barley crop. This time, the WHEAT CROP was ready for harvest and an offering of the firstfruits of wheat was made.

Seven weeks - 49 days +1 = 50 days

It HAD to occur PRECISELY 50 days after Firstfruits. The greeks named it ‘Pentecost’ – which means 50.

<click> : Pentecost

As I noted earlier, Shavout/Pentecost was a MANDATORY festival Remember the description of the Holy Spirit filling the disciples and they began to speak in other tongues? Acts chapter 2 records:

“And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and

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visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.” Acts 2:6–11.

Now you know WHY there were SO MANY people from foreign lands in Jerusalem at that time: they were attending the MANDATORY feast of Shavout.

- This was the anniversary of God giving the Ten Commandments on TABLETS OF STONE on Mt. Sinai. It was a scene FULL OF FIRE and NOISE on the Mountain.
 - Here, at Pentecost in the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit would be writing those commands on people’s HEARTS thru TONGUES OF FIRE and a MIGHTY RUSHING WIND.
-
- ❖ So, Jesus the Messiah, our Passover Lamb, was slain on the Feast of Passover;
 - ❖ He was buried late that afternoon and went into the grave on the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Unleavened bread speaks of an absence of sin, and *absence of decay and corruption*. Christ’s sinless body was put into the tomb and it DID NOT DECAY.
 - ❖ He arose on the Feast of Firstfruits – this speaks of first-things ...the first of things always belongs to God. Jesus is

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called the firstfruits of the resurrection from the dead; because of Him, **we too** shall all be resurrected.³⁰

And then, the Holy Spirit came EXACTLY 50 days later on the long established feast of Pentecost!

Now, that is 4 very interesting “coincidences”, are they not?

~ Well, naturally, I say “coincidences” tongue-in-cheek....for this was not coincidence, this was the whole point of the Festivals in the first place.

Again, I want to emphasize that these were NOT days invented by the church to signify certain events in the NT.

- Jesus celebrated Passover in Jerusalem as a child and was slain on Passover day. But, Passover itself had been celebrated for over 1400 years prior to Jesus’ birth.
- The feast of Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits were also over 1400 years old.
- **And Pentecost was NOT a new holiday created for by the Church to describe the awesome moment when the Holy Spirit descended upon men; Pentecost was established in the Torah Law on Mount Sinai 1400 years previously. The**

³⁰ I Corinthians 15:23

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Holy Spirit merely came on that LONG-ESTABLISHED APPOINTED DAY.

These festivals were prophetic rehearsals for what happened in exact detail in history.

And that's just the first four of seven festivals.

SLIDE: LAST THREE FEASTS

We've reviewed the first 4 Festivals, and I'll just briefly touch upon the last 3 – the Fall Festivals. What is important for us to grasp is that the first 4 Festivals were fulfilled on the EXACT appointed day of each of the Festivals.

The 3 Fall Feasts always begin in the month of Tisrei, which is the 1st month of the year by the civil calendar and the 7th month of the religious event year.

On Tishrei 1 is Rosh Hashanah; Tishrei 10 is the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur; and Tishrei 15 begins the week-long celebration of Sukkot or Tabernacles.

< Click > This year, those dates correspond to October 2nd, October 11th and Sukkot begins on October 16th.

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One of the central principles of Hebrew thought that I mentioned throughout the 35 sessions is the CONCEPT OF PATTERNS.

- You may not know WHY something is happening, but if you can see a pattern in what has happened before, you can anticipate what is LIKELY to occur again.

Now – what I’m going to say is not infallible, but some others³¹ have voiced this opinion and I kind of agree with them. The first three festivals were fulfilled by Jesus in a relatively *short timeframe* – *three days*. Pentecost was fulfilled 50 days later. Is this a PATTERN we’ll see in the future with these last three Festivals?

If the pattern of the first four feasts is obvious, it is reasonable to assume that the last three feasts will be similar. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that **ALL of the final works of Christ will occur on the last 3 Biblical Feasts** – and in a very narrow scope of time.

<click> Trumpets

The Biblical name for Rosh Hashanah is the *Festival of Trumpets* – *Yom Terauh*. Prophetically, this day signals **the Day of the Lord**; or

³¹ Tom Bradford, *The 7 Biblical Feasts Part 1*
<http://www.torahclass.com/other-studies/47-other-studies-text/683-7-biblical-feasts-part-1>

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as we Christians often call it, **the Day of Judgment**.³² It is the day Messiah returns and begins to execute God's judgment on a wicked and unrepentant world. All of the prophets refer to it as a "*day of darkness*".

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Matthew 24:31

"Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 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 will be changed. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

"How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of **trouble for Jacob**, but he will be saved out of it 'It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will **break his yoke from off their neck** and will tear off their bonds; and **strangers will no longer make them their slaves.....**"

Jeremiah 30:7-8

Prophetically, YOM KIPPUR symbolizes that **all Israel will be saved!**³³

Now, some say – *if all Israel will be saved, why evangelize the Jews?* Because it is all Israel ALIVE AT THAT TIME who will be saved, not everyone who lived prior to that.

³² High Holidays, Day of Judgment, Chabad.org

³³ Romans 11:26

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He returns "For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?" Revelation 6:17

Jesus came the 1st time as the kinsman redeemer regarding our salvation; next time, he comes in the associated role as the Blood redeemer. He comes as the greatest warrior of all time.

THE FINALS FEAST IS TABERNACLES (Sukkot), which foretells the New Jerusalem descending, Jesus among His people.

OK – that's it on the festivals and the presentations on the Book of Numbers. Now, the Book of Numbers does not end with Moses' death. Moses would go on to write the Book of Deuteronomy, which is a compilation of three sermons to the people. Moses would die at that end of that Book, and God would hide his body so that it would not be worshipped by people.

So, how to wrap-up this session on this Book of Numbers? I'll do it with a central theme of the Bible that I shared in the very first session, four years ago. **God's desire to dwell with us.**

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SLIDE: NISAN AS 1ST MONTH

As I mentioned just a bit earlier, God established the month of Nisan (the month that included Passover) rather than Tishrei – the month of Rosh Hashanah – as the beginning of the religious year.

The Jews viewed *Rosh Hashanah* was the primary month. The 1st of Tishrei, which is Rosh Hashanah, is considered to be the anniversary of the creation of the world. This is what Jews saw as the most central event to ever take place and therefore the first or primary month.

But God view of reality is very different than ours. To Him, the MOST significant moment in time was the Exodus from Egypt, which made Israel into a people and opened up the door for His relationship with us. And that was possible because of the death of the Passover Lamb.

- Nothing can be more basic to understanding **WHY** the world was created than that event.

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE IS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT. GOD MADE NISAN THE FIRST OF MONTHS. It's so easy to skip over this seemingly minor oh-hum detail about God's choice of the month of Nisan to begin the religious calendar. But within that choice is the entire theme of the Bible and human history – God desires to dwell with us.

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DWELL IN THEIR MIDST – that’s a KEY to understanding what’s going on in the entire Bible. We should write that on our hand like we sometimes did in high school to pass an exam.

Passover restarted the process to reestablish a relationship that was lost in the Garden; laws and regulations of the Torah moved the process along, and it was finalized with the death of His Son on Passover.

- I can’t emphasize enough how this insight regarding the most important month to Him is.

He desires to dwell with us. I take that as true, but I don’t know why, only He does. But although I don’t know why, what’s not my concern. My concern is *“what does it take for a human being to dwell in the presence of a Holy God AND LIVE?”*

- What does it take for a human to dwell in the presence of a Holy God for all eternity and SURVIVE a vision of Holiness that Isaiah said made his whole being disintegrate?

➤ IT TAKES A WAY THAT ONLY HE CAN PROVIDE.

And with this thought, we’ve come full circle. In the very first session on the Book of Numbers, some four years ago, I said that

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the Book of Numbers is a record of the coming Messiah is on every page.

Christ is the way – the ONLY way – that existence in His presence can happen through the true Lamb of God, His shed blood and our repentance, we will live. Happy Resurrection day!