

**April 24**

**Scriptures:** Read Leviticus 23

**Key Verse:** "... The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts." (Leviticus 23:2)

## **Overview**

Thus far in the book of Leviticus, we have learned about the holiness of the sanctuary and the sacrifices as well as the holiness of the people and the priests; now we come to the chapter dealing with the "holy convocations" which are the "feasts of the Lord" (23:2, 37). The complete calendar of the Israelite religious year is briefly described here. The celebrations were designed to remind the people that all good, gifts, such as a good harvest, come from God and are manifestations of His care, love, and goodness. Observing these feasts at the proper times and in the prescribed manner showed their obedience and loyalty to God. These feasts also served to remind Israel, especially to the coming generations, of the great things God had done for them.

The most important and the oldest feast God designated was the weekly observance of the Sabbath (23:3), their day of rest. It reminded them of His creative work (Gen. 1-2:3; Ex. 31:17) and was a sign of their covenant relationship (Ex. 31:13) and His redeeming them from bondage (Deut. 5:15). It was the Lord's "holy day", a "pleasure", "delight", and "honorable" day (Isa.58:13). Although the stress is upon physical rest and refreshment, the primary purpose was spiritual refreshment in renewing fellowship with God.

The Passover (23:4-5) marked the beginning of the religious year. It began at sunset on the fourteenth day of the first month called "Nisan" (March or April). It was a lunar calendar, so the months vary from year to year. The first Passover was observed in Egypt (Ex. 12:2, 6-7, 12). In this very significant feast, the Israelites proclaimed the redeeming grace of God and reaffirmed their faith in Him. It was to always remind them of God's miraculous intervention on their behalf in Egypt when the Lord's death angel "passed over" the homes with the blood applied to its doorposts. Likewise, the Last Supper reminds us today of Jesus' intervention and sacrificial blood that was shed to be applied to the doorpost of our heart.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (fifteenth of Nisan) accompanied the celebrations of the Passover. For a period of seven days, the first and seventh being Sabbaths, the Israelites were to eat only unleavened bread and all the men were required to be present before the Lord (Deut. 16:16). It commemorated their exodus from slavery, for they were to take only unleavened bread (Ex. 12:39) and leave immediately at the time when God opened the way because of His many miracles, the climax of which was the Passover. Believers are to "purge out the old leaven [sin]..." and be "...unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

When the people entered the Promised Land, they were to observe the Feast of First Fruits. This occurred when the first early crop was ready for harvest, sometimes in April. No grain from the new crop was to be eaten until they acknowledged that it had come as a blessing from God. Jesus Christ is called "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor.15:20-23). Just as the first

ripe grain came as a promise of more harvest to follow, so Christ's resurrection assures us of the coming spiritual harvest and our own future resurrection.

The Feast of Pentecost, meaning "fiftieth [day]", also called the Feast of Weeks, is a Sabbath celebration coming 50 days after the start of the First Fruits. It was the second feast for which all Israelite males were to be in attendance. It was a joyous occasion in thankfulness to the Lord for harvest and for providing their daily bread. They were not to forget the needy, so they were reminded to leave the gleanings (23:22).

The feast of Trumpets was a holy Sabbath on the first day of the seventh month of Tishri (October). The people would blow the ram's horn to awaken Israel to prepare for the important and most solemn Day of Atonement which came ten days later. This was observed by a Sabbath, a fast, and the sacrifice of animals to atone for sin. Even though there were many sacrifices through the year, this was not sufficient to cover sin. This serious day reminded the Israelites that there could be no joy in their covenant relationship without sin being dealt with, especially through the substitute (details in Lev.16).

On the fifteenth day of the same month of Tishri, the Feast of Tabernacles began and lasted for eight days. The first and eight days were holy Sabbaths and, for the third time in the year, all the men were to appear before the Lord. During this time, the Israelites lived in booths to remind them of God's provision and protection after their departure from Egypt and their traveling in the wilderness, living in crude tents and booths. It confirmed their acknowledgement that the Lord, Yahweh, was their God (23:43).

## **Prayer**

Lord Go, You have given us a great weekly convocation in the New Covenant called "The Lord's Day". Grant us the grace to be obedient so we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. (Heb.10:25).