

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

6-23-21

Leviticus 23

The Appointed Festivals - Verses 1-2

23 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed festivals, the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.

23:1 Festivals played a major role in Israel's culture. Israel's festivals were different from those of any other nation because, being ordained by God, they were times of celebrating with him, not times of moral depravity. God wanted to set aside special days for the people to come together for rest, refreshment, and remembering with thanksgiving all he had done for them.

23:1-2 God established several national holidays each year for celebration, fellowship, and worship. Much can be learned about people by observing the holidays they celebrate and the way they celebrate them. Take note of your holiday traditions. What do they say about your values? In what ways do your celebrations and holidays reflect your relationship with God?

The Sabbath - Verse 3

³ "There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the LORD.

23:3 The seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest: The Sabbath was not properly a feast, but like the feast days, it was a day set apart unto the LORD, and so a reminder regarding the Sabbath is here.

The Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread - Verses 4-8

⁴ "These are the LORD's appointed festivals, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: ⁵ The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. ⁶ On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Festival of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. ⁷ On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. ⁸ For seven days present a food offering to the LORD. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work."

23:6 The Festival of Unleavened Bread reminded Israel of their escape from Egypt. For seven days they ate unleavened bread, just as they had eaten it back then (Exodus 12:14-15). The symbolism of this bread made without yeast was important to the Israelites. First, because the bread was unique, it illustrated Israel's uniqueness as a nation. Second, because yeast was a symbol of sin, the yeast-less bread represented Israel's moral purity. Third, the baking method reminded

them to obey quickly. Their ancestors left the yeast out of their dough so they could leave Egypt quickly without waiting for the dough to rise.

Offering the Firstfruits - Verses 9-14

⁹ The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁰ "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. ¹¹ He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. ¹² On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb a year old without defect, ¹³ together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with olive oil—a food offering presented to the LORD, a pleasing aroma—and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. ¹⁴ You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

23:9-14 The Festival of Firstfruits required that the first crops harvested be offered to God. The Israelites could not eat the food from their harvest until they had made this offering. Today God still expects us to set aside his portion first, not last. Giving leftovers to God is no way to express thanks. What do "firstfruits" represent in your life?

The Festival of Weeks - Verses 15-22

¹⁵ "From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. ¹⁶ Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. ¹⁷ From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. ¹⁸ Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁹ Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. ²⁰ The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ²² "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God."

23:15-21 The Festival of Weeks was a festival praising God for a bountiful harvest. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD: Fifty days after the feast of firstfruits, at the completion of the wheat harvest, Israel was to celebrate the feast of Pentecost by bringing a new grain offering to the LORD; and by waving two loaves of leavened bread unto the LORD.

23:22 You shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap: This repeats the command of Leviticus 19:9-10; this was a law to provide a means for the poor and the stranger to eat by working for themselves and gleaning what was left behind. This was an appropriate reminder right after the law concerning the harvest feast of Pentecost.

The Festival of Trumpets - Verses 23-24

²³ The LORD said to Moses, ²⁴ "Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. ²⁵ Do no regular work, but present a food offering to the LORD.'"

23:23-24 Most of the trumpets used were rams' horns, although some of the more special trumpets were made of beaten silver. Trumpets were blown to announce the beginning of each month as well as the start of festivals.

The Day of Atonement - Verses 26-32

²⁶ The LORD said to Moses, ²⁷ "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves,^[d] and present a food offering to the LORD. ²⁸ Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God. ²⁹ Those who do not deny themselves on that day must be cut off from their people. ³⁰ I will destroy from among their people anyone who does any work on that day. ³¹ You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ³² It is a day of sabbath rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath."

23:26-32 Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement: On the tenth of Tishri, the people gathered again for a holy convocation; but this was not a celebration feast, but a day to afflict your souls in humble recognition of one's sin and need for atonement.

The Festival of Tabernacles - Verses 33-43

³³ The LORD said to Moses, ³⁴ "Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. ³⁵ The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. ³⁶ For seven days present food offerings to the LORD, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the LORD. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work. ³⁷ ("These are the LORD's appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings to the LORD—the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. ³⁸ These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and^[e] in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.) ³⁹ "So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. ⁴⁰ On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms,

willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. ⁴¹ Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters ⁴³ so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”

23:33-43 The Festival of Tabernacles, also known as the Festival of Ingathering, was a special celebration involving the whole family (see 23:34; Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 16:13-14). Like Passover, this festival taught family members of all ages about God's nature and what he had done for them and was a time of renewed commitment to God. Our families also need rituals of celebration to renew our faith and to pass it on to our children. In addition to Christmas and Easter, we should select other special days to commemorate God's goodness.

23:33-43 The prophetic significance of the feasts of Leviticus 23.

1. Structurally, the first four feasts are linked together, and the last three feasts are also linked - and there is a separation of time between these two groups of feasts.

2. The group of the first four feasts relate to the work of Jesus in His first coming, of His earthly ministry.

a. The feast of Passover clearly presents Jesus as our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), the Lamb of God who was sacrificed, and whose blood was received and applied, so the wrath of God would pass us over.

b. The feast of Unleavened Bread relates the time of Jesus' burial, after His perfect, sinless sacrifice on the cross, during which He was received by God the Father as holy and complete (the Holy One who would not see corruption, Acts 2:27), perfectly accomplishing our salvation.

We may regard the burial (or actually, entombment) of Jesus as a small thing in God's redemptive plan; but it was an essential part of Paul's gospel: For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

c. The feast of Firstfruits relates to the resurrection of Jesus, He is the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18) and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep ... Christ the firstfruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at His coming. (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23)

d. The feast of Pentecost obviously is connected with the birth of the Church and the "harvest" resulting (Acts 2); significantly, in the ceremony at the feast of Pentecost, two unleavened loaves of bread are waved as a holy offering to God, speaking of the bringing of "unleavened" Gentiles into the church.

23:33-43 . Between the first set of four feasts and the second set of three feasts, there is a significant time gap - almost four months, which, significantly, was a time of harvest in Israel; even as our current age is a time of harvest for the church, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. (Romans 11:25)

The second group of the last three feasts relate to events connected with the second coming of Jesus.

a. The feast of **Trumpets** speaks of the ultimate assembly of God's people at the sound of a trumpet - the rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and of the gathering of Israel for the special purpose God has for them in the last days.

b. The **Day of Atonement** not only speaks of the ultimate, perfect atonement Jesus offered on our behalf, but also of the affliction - and salvation - Israel will see during the Great Tribulation.

c. The **feast of Tabernacles** speaks of the millennial rest of comfort of God for Israel and all of God's people; it is all about peace and rest, from beginning to end.

5. Significantly, there is good evidence that each of the four feasts relevant to the first coming of Jesus saw their prophetic fulfillment on the exact day of the feast.

a. Jesus was actually crucified on the Passover (John 19:14). His body would have been buried, and His holy and pure sacrifice acknowledged by God the Father during the Feast of Unleavened Bread following, and He would have risen from the dead on Firstfruits, the day after Passover's Sabbath. Additionally, the church was founded on the actual day of Pentecost.

b. For this reason, many speculate it would be consistent for God to gather His people to Himself at the rapture on the day of the feast of trumpets - on the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah. This can certainly be regarded as a possibility.

The Festival of Tabernacles - Verse 44

⁴⁴ So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed festivals of the LORD.

23:44 Worship involves both celebration and confession. But in Israel's national holidays, the balance seems heavily tipped in favor of celebration—five joyous occasions to two solemn ones. The God of the Bible encourages joy! God does not intend for religion to be only meditation and introspection. He also wants us to celebrate. Serious reflection and immediate confession of sin is essential, of course. But this should be balanced by celebrating who God is and what he has done for his people. What special occasions on your calendar would you describe as times for joy? Which would be times for confession? How are you doing with the five-to-two balance?