

Leviticus 23

“Holy Calendar – part one”

Introduction

- Tonight we continue our study in the book of Leviticus - The theme of Leviticus is Holiness.
 - The idea of holiness literally translated means “to be set apart” – different than the world around you.
 - And it serves as the theme and outline for the book of Leviticus.

The Book of Leviticus – Holiness unto the Lord

Holy Offerings – Leviticus 1-7

Holy Priesthood – Leviticus 8-10, 21-22

Holy People – Leviticus 11-15, 17-20, 26-27

Holy Calendar – Leviticus 16, 23-25

- The first week we looked at the five holy offerings that the priests would offer with the people
 - Then we looked at the priests and what God required of them and how He prepared them for ministry and we applied to us as a Kingdom of Priests.
- Last week we overview the different chapters that dealt with God wanted to separate His people from the world around them.
 - We looked at laws concerning cleanliness – in what they ate, with childbirth, disease and bodily fluids (my favorite).
 - Then we look at the laws concerning holiness – God wanted His people to have a different view on blood, on intimacy, and on life and death.
- And then in the last two chapters of the book we see the seriousness of following Gods will – with all the “ifs and end results” that close the book.

But tonight we move on to the final and my favorite section of the book and that is the Holy Calendar.

- God tells Moses basically I want control of the national day timer.
 - I want to set times to for the people to meet with me and reflect on who I am and who they are in light of that.
 - So God sets up 7 feast of the Lord.
 - Not just of Israel – but God says – these are my holidays.
- These are my, as it says literally “appointed” times – and that means significant times, times that are important.
 - To look back and to look ahead.

You see what we need to understand about the Feasts of God is they were a little different than our holidays.

- Our holidays look back.
 - Christmas – we look back to the birth of Christ, I think – it may be about Santa Claus and reindeer now, but if I remember correctly, originally it was for looking back to the birth of Christ.
 - 4th of July – we look back to independence from England.
- Thanksgiving – we look back to when God provided for the pilgrims or as we teach it today – when the Native Americans took care of the Pilgrims.

But with each of these holidays we have look back to some significant event in our history.

- And the Jews had that as well – each one of the Feasts looked back to a significant event in their history.

- But different than ours, the feasts of God looked ahead to some significant thing God would do.

That would be really cool wouldn't it?

- Imagine next July 4th, not only are we celebrating our national freedom, but what if everyone all over the country was looking forward to when God would free us from our sins in heaven with a new body.
 - That would cool.
 - Well that is the Feasts of God.

Now some important background on these feasts to kind of get our bearings a little bit before we dive in.

- The Feasts of the Lord basically occurred in two parts of the year.
 - There were what we would call:

The Spring Feasts

- **In the first month of the Jewish Year (our March-April) were the first 3 feasts.**

The Feast of Passover

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of First Fruits

- **Then 50 days later would be the fourth feast.**

The Feast of Pentecost or The Feast of Weeks

The Fall Feasts (New slide)

- **Then in the seventh month of the year, in between our September – October would be the final 3 feasts of the year.**

The Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah

The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur

The Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering

They would all occur fairly close together.

- The first three are all within one eight day period of time – that is what we are studying in Mark 11.
 - The next one was 50 days later.
- And then the last three feasts took place within a three-week period of time.

The reason I bring this up is in Deuteronomy 16:16 God makes it clear that all Jewish males were to appear before the Lord 3 times a year.

- The first time was during that 8 day period of time when the first three feasts occurred – remember I have been telling you that when Jesus had His final week in Jerusalem, they city would swell to millions of people – why? – Because God required them in their law to be there – but not just at Passover, secondly...
 - They were to go home and then 50 days later they were to return for the Feast of Pentecost or Weeks – because it was seven weeks after the feast of First Fruits.
- And then 4 months later they were to come back again for the feast of tabernacles or if they could, the entire 3 weeks of the Fall Feasts.

So God get them there for these important days, and I find it so interesting that for the men it was mandatory.

- The women were invited and welcomed, but men, you had to appear before the Lord.
 - I find that so interesting.
- Because we live in a culture where the women are generally considered more spiritual than the men and its excepted– not this church, but the vast majority of churches in America are 65 to 75 percent women who attend – which I don't know why guys haven't figured that out yet – but that is the reality.

That may be normal in America today, but men I want you to see that is not the heart of the Lord.

- God wants you to be here with him.
 - Your precious wife, sometimes the kids, and the pressures of things at home, she needs to stay home, and God understands.

But so often what we do is say – well the kids aren't feeling well, I don't want my wife to have to take care of them alone – or she can go but someone has to stay home with the dog.

- She will be so blessed if I stay home and watch football while she takes care of the sick kids.
 - Men – no – you are to spiritually lead your home.

Your wife wants you to come and pray and spend time with the Lord – your wife knows you need to.

- But in our culture we don't seem to see this.
 - I find it so interesting that every year – do you know what Sunday is second only to Easter as far as attendance goes? – Second only to Easter.
 - Mother's day! – That is right – where the women say – the one thing I want for mother's day is for you to come to church with me.
- Do you know what one of the lowest attendance Sundays? – Father's day.
 - Where men all over the country say, the one thing I want today is for you to leave me alone about church – the US Open is on – I'm staying home - We can be such slackers as guys.

This was not the way it was in Israel.

- The women were invited and encourage to attend.
 - But God understands they have kids and many other things on their plates – okay
 - But for the men – mandatory – you need to be in the presence of God regularly.

Let it be the men in this fellowship who lead and who see the value in attendance and following the Lord in their families.

- Anyway – 7 feasts.
 - Three in the spring, one 50 days later, 3 in the fall.

These feasts would look back to various events in their history as we will consider, and then they would look forward to the coming Messiah and His eventually rule and reign.

- Tonight we will look at the first four feasts.
 - And next week, my favorite of favorites, the fall feasts.
 - So we are slowing it way down from last week where we overviewed 12 chapters.
 - But that is because this is so important.

The Feasts of the Lord - The Spring Feasts

The Feast of Passover – Leviticus 23:1-5

- The feast of the year was the feast of Passover.
 - Now it is just mentioned briefly here in Leviticus chapter 23, for more details, you Bible students may want to read Exodus chapter 12 which gives you the story of the first Passover.
- The Jewish people were slaves in Egypt and God had risen up Moses to deliver His people from Egypt.
 - And through a series of 9 plagues up to that point, Pharaoh was not budging; he was not letting the people go.

So God tells Pharaoh a 10th plague is coming, and it would cost him and everyone else in Egypt the life of their first born – their first born child, the first born of your animals – so much death.

- And that has led some to say – what is God doing?
 - It doesn't seem like Him to kill people and children, what is going on?
- Well, first of all – don't forget God gave them 9 shots across the bow.
 - At any time these plagues could have stopped and Pharaoh could have let the people go.
 - But He did not.
 - He gave them much warning and...

God gave them a way out – the Passover.

- God told anyone that would listen, that they were to take a lamb without spot or blemish.
 - They were to take this lamb into their homes on the 10th of Nisan as we have been looking at on Sundays in Mark.
 - And for 4 days – they would fall in love with that lamb and inspect that lamb to make sure it really was without spot or blemish.
- Then on the 14th day of the month, they were to take that lamb, be careful not to break bones, but kill it and spread the blood on the doorposts.
 - And if they did this – the death angel would Passover them.
- God gave them a warning and God gave them a way out.

And for the rest of their history the Jews would commemorate this night with the Feast of Passover.

- The family would feast on the lamb and be ready to be on the move.
 - They would eat bitter herbs to remind them of their bondage in Egypt, and they would break bread together, unleavened bread, matzah, because they did not have time to bake their bread with leaven.
 - They were leaving the bondage of Egypt.

Okay so what – we see what it was celebrated, what it looked back to and how they celebrated, but what was the deal?

- Well the Feast of Passover not only looked back, but it looked ahead as well.

We understand that Passover pointed to Jesus' sacrifice.

- John the Baptist declared – “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”.

Jesus was examined on the 10th (the 14th of Nisan) and found to be perfect.

- He would be killed at the same exact moment that the Passover lambs were being killed in the temple for the people. On the 14th of Nisan.
 - Even as He took his last breath, the soldiers came by and were breaking the bones of the other men who were crucified that day because they could not have the bodies on the cross as the feast of unleavened bread started.
 - But when they came to Jesus, He was already dead and not a bone of His was broken.
 - It all spoke of Jesus.

Even the Jewish meal of Passover points to Jesus.

- The Jews would place 3 pieces of Matzah in one bag and they would then pull the middle piece out. Then wrap the middle piece in linen and break it.
 - That middle piece of Matzah bread was called the “afikoman”.
- **“Afikoman” is the only Greek word in the Seder Feast and it means - “I have come”.**

- And get this – Moroccan Jews take the afikoman bread home with them, and their tradition says, if you encounter a storm at sea on the way home, you throw the afikoman into the water and it will calm the storm.

Now you ask them why – why is do you take 3 pieces of matzah and put it in one bag, why three?

- Why do you break the middle one and call it a Greek name?
 - Why do the Moroccan Jews think this break can calm a storm?
- And their answers don't make a lot of sense.

They will tell you well, the three pieces of bread represent the priests, the Levites and the Jewish people.

- Okay – why do you break the Levites? – Not sure?
 - And why does the Afikoman bread supposedly calm storms? – Because the Moroccans are crazy?

No – because it is all a picture of Jesus.

- The three pieces in one bag.
 - God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.
 - You take the middle piece, the Afikoman – representing God the Son, Jesus, Greek name as well for Yahshua.
 - Break it – because He was broken on the cross.
 - Wrap it in linen – because Jesus was wrapped in Linen.
 - And why do they think it calms the storm, well because this guy named Jesus did that a lot.
 - It's all a picture of Jesus.
- The sinless lamb that died for our sins.
 - And just as the angel of death would Passover the people's houses who had the blood applied to the door, so too, our eternal destiny is based on us applying the blood of the cross to our lives.
 - So simple – but friends – so important.

The Feasts of the Lord - The Spring Feasts

The Feast of Passover

The Feast of Unleavened Bread – Leviticus 23:6-8

- Now the day after Passover was the 14th of Nisan, on the day after or the 15th of Nisan - you would start this weeklong feast of unleavened bread.
 - You would clean all the leaven out of your house.
 - And then you would eat unleavened bread for a week's time.

Now this feast or celebration also looked back to the Exodus, when they had to leave in a hurry.

- So the bread was not leavened, there was no time, and God knowing this, instructed them to go through the house and rid the house of leaven.
 - And for seven days after Passover the Jews would feast, but they would feast without leaven, this matzah bread.

Okay – interesting but why is that important?

- Because not only was the feast of unleavened bread looking back to the night they left Egypt, and the first week's journey into the wilderness.
 - But it was also looking forward to another event.

You Jesus was crucified during the Day on the Passover, the 14th of Nisan around 3 o'clock the bible tells us.

- The exact same time the Passover lamb was being offered in the temple for the sins of the people.
 - Jesus was killed on the Feast of Passover and put in the tomb during the Feast of Unleavened bread.

You see as we have already seen this unleavened bread was a picture of the crucified Christ.

- Matzah because of the way it is baked is stripped and pierced as you can see in the picture.

- **Picture of Matzah**

- And what do we know about Jesus?

Isaiah 53:5 tells us, “He was wounded (literally pierced) for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” – Isaiah 53:5

Jesus said I am the bread of life.

- And truly the Matzah bread pointed to Jesus.
 - The middle piece of Matzah, the Afikoman, was wrapped in linen.
 - Because He was wrapped in linen.
- And the Jews on the Feast of Unleavened bread would go through out their house and see if it was free from sin and rebellion.

Now as it relates to cleaning the house from leaven there is a great lesson in there for us personally.

- Leaven was a picture of sin – because it spread – and so does sin today – bad attitudes transferee from one person to another – I remember dealing with a kid who would tell me “I only a kid, I’m only a kid” – I would say, your 18 and it is time to serve the Lord. I met with his dad and the dad said to me, “He is only a kid” – I get it know – these things spread.

Well as believers we are rid our lives of the sinful practices so common in the world around us – that is legalism man – no it isn’t – understand the balance.

- The Jews were not saved because they rid their lives of leaven; the blood of the lamb saved them.
 - But the putting away of leaven was something they did, along side the feast of Passover.
- For you and me – we are not saved because we put sin away in our lives, because we have victory over a bad habit.
 - The blood of the lamb saves us.
 - However – we are to at the same time, ridding our lives of sinful practices is something that goes hand in hand with what a believer does.
- What a bummer – no this, no that.
 - Again, see the picture, it is beautiful.

The Jews would feast, but they would feast without leaven.

- What are we saying?
 - Friends our relationships with the Lord are not meant to be funerals – down and somber.
- No – it is a feast – it is such a joy to walk with God.
 - It is a feast though, without leaven.
- And really, it is the leaven that makes life unenjoyable.
 - I Corinthians 5:7 says it best.

“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.” – I Corinthians 5:7

- Back to the picture.
 - Jesus was killed on the feast of Passover.
 - Buried, hidden like the afikoman on the feast of unleavened bread – died during the day on Passover, buried that evening on the feast of unleavened bread.

- Well – it gets better – check this out.

The Feasts of the Lord - The Spring Feasts

The Feast of Passover

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of First Fruits – Leviticus 23:9-14

- The Third Feast, The Feast of First Fruits was to be celebrated on the day after the Sabbath which followed the Passover – remember that – that is important! – It commemorated going toward a good land – but it celebrated that fact the harvest had come in and they were looking forward for more.

The celebration consisted of the priest taking the first bundle of barely that was harvested and then waving it before the Lord – saying to God – this yours, the first part of our harvest, our income belongs to you.

They were not to eat of the harvest until this ritual took place – and of course there are all types of lessons to be learned from the feast of first fruits and taking what God has given us, and before we begin to partake of it, giving to the Lord what is His.

- Now what is interesting about these things is not just that they had a celebration to look back at God's goodness.
 - But for the Jew they saw this as a promise that God would be faithful to them in the future.

For us as believers – it was more than just material faithfulness.

- It was on this feast that the ultimate demonstration of God's love took place.
 - You see the day after the Sabbath, which follows the Passover, would be – Sunday – the day after Saturday or Sabbath is Sunday.
- And what happened on the Feast of First fruits that year – Someone rose from the dead.
 - Jesus!!!!

Jesus was crucified on the Passover.

- Buried on the Feast of Unleavened bread.
- Rose from the dead on the Feast of First fruits – the Sunday the followed the Sabbath that followed the Passover.

Paul the apostle picks up on this idea when he says in I Corinthians 15...

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death and by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.” – I Corinthians 15:20-23

Jesus is the first fruit of the resurrection.

- Jesus was the first to rise from the dead, never to die again.
 - I know Lazarus was raised from the dead and the widow's son at Nain.
 - But they didn't receive new bodies – they died again.
- Jesus rose from the grave on the feast of first fruits, as the first fruit.
 - Meaning – He is the first with the promise that more is on the way.

When you and I take our last breath here on earth, we will be raised with Him, given new bodies, free from sin and sickness and death.

- How do I know we will?
 - Because Jesus was the first, He was the first fruit, the celebration and promise that more is on the way.
 - He is the first, but He will not be the last, that is future for every single one of us who believe.

The Feasts of the Lord - The Spring Feasts

The Feast of Passover

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Feast of First Fruits

The Feast of Pentecost or Weeks– Leviticus 23:15-22

- Now for the last feast that we are going to look at tonight.
 - The first three all happened with one 8-day period of time.
 - There was the Passover – the 14th of Nisan.
 - There was the Feast of Unleavened Bread – started on the 15th and lasted a week.
 - There was the Feast of First fruits – that took place on the day after the Sabbath the followed Passover.

Jesus was killed on the Passover.

- Was buried on the Feast of Unleavened Bread – our savior without sin.
 - And then He rose from the dead on the day after the Sabbath that followed Passover – Sunday, the Feast of First Fruits.

Well then we are told to count 7 more Weeks after the Feast of First Fruits.

- 7 weeks – That is why it is called the Feast of Weeks.
 - And you come to another Sunday, 7 weeks after the Feast of First Fruits and you come to a Feast called the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost as it is called else where in the scripture.
- On the feast of Pentecost – which was one day in which you could do no work – the priest would wave two loaves of bread with leaven before the Lord – the two loaves would be one offering before the Lord.

Now Jewish scholars believe that it looked back to the birth of Judaism – because according to their writings 7 weeks after leaving Egypt they were their at Mount Sinai and God gave to them the law and directed them into how to be a people – and the Jewish Nation was born.

- God spoke the law, and according to Jewish tradition it was heard in 70 languages, the amount of known languages at the time – the mount appeared to be on fire, the ground shook. God gave His law.
 - As Moses came down the Mountain – the people were in sin, and God judged 3,000 dead when the Law came down and Judaism was born.
- And they will say that these two pieces of bread being waved represent the two tables of stone.
 - Then you ask – but they are leavened bread – is the law sin – no??? – Why two leavened loaves – well maybe these Feast is pointing to more.

I think the two loaves looked forward to the day God would take Gentiles and Jews, both sinner, both having leaven and make them one in the form of the church.

- You see it was on the Feast of Pentecost when in Acts chapter 2 the church was born.
 - In the upper room – fire came down upon their heads – strange tongues were heard, church history records it was also in 70 languages, but when the Spirit came down 3,000 people saved.
- The Feast of Weeks looked back to the birth of the nation of Israel.
 - But it also looked forward to the birth of the church.

Another interesting thing to me is on the Feast of Pentecost, the orthodox Jews to this day, read the book of Ruth.

- Why? – If you ask them, they will say, well it is about a harvest and the Feast of Weeks is celebrating the later harvest.
 - Okay – I have a better idea.

The Book of Ruth is about a Jew (Naomi) who goes to Moab, her husband dies and she brings back a Gentile (Ruth) to her country.

- Ruth says your people will be my people and your God my God.
 - So it's the story of a Gentile, learning and bring bought into family by a Jew, learning about God from a Jew.
 - Marries a Jewish Groom.
- But then the Babe – is the grandfather of David, who is of course the Great Grandfather of Jesus.
 - So the Jew into the Gentile to her Jewish Groom – but the Babe of Bethlehem belong to the Gentile, until in the last chapter Ruth hands the babe to the Naomi, the Jew, and then Ruth disappears from the story.

You see we, the church met God and learned about God from whom – the Jews.

- The OT – Romans chapter 9, 10 and 11 says us Gentiles have been grafted into the family of God.
 - They introduced us to Him.
- We then married a Jewish Groom – Jesus, the Jew.
 - But the babe of Bethlehem – that belongs to us, the church, made of up Jew and Gentile – two loaves, but with Leaven.
 - Until – the Gentile bride disappears, leaves the story.
 - And then the babe of Bethlehem works in the Jewish people again.
- When the church is taken off the scene in the rapture – God will begin to work with His people Israel again, the babe will be theirs.
 - And all of Israel will be saved – Romans 11:26
 - Wonderful – amazing these things are to me.

Jesus was crucified on the Feast of Passover.

- He was buried on the Feats of Unleaded Bread.
- He rose on the Feast of First Fruits.
 - And the Church was born on the Feast of Weeks.

Now these first four feasts – what they were looking to prophetically have already occurred.

- But the Fall Feast – we are still waiting their fulfillment.
 - Do you think something huge someday will happen on the Feast of Trumpets, or the Day of Atonement?
 - Or the Feast of Tabernacles – which is tonight by the way.
- I think so, and we will look at that next week – can't wait.