

The Feasts of Jehovah

Part 3

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[00:00:00] I think I'll tell you my proposed plan of action for tonight, if action is the word.

We are looking at the significance of the Feasts of the Lord detailed in Leviticus 23 this week.

We've already considered the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

We have considered that the Passover is the picture in the Old Testament of the fact that unless we believe that Jesus died for us, we haven't made a spiritual start and we don't [00:01:01] have a spiritual life.

We learned from the Feast of Unleavened Bread that if we have trusted Jesus as our Savior, if we do confess him as our Lord, it should not only be a matter of believing something that makes us go to church or a meeting one day a week, but it should affect the whole of our lives every day of every week.

Not only in the sense of keeping clear of evil, but so filling our minds and our lives and our souls and our hearts with the Lord Jesus personally and the significance of all that he has done and is doing, and that in a positive way, in the spiritual sense, we have to feed upon him day by day.

[00:02:04] Now tonight we turn to two more feasts, the Feasts of Firstfruits and the Feast of Pentecost.

Now what I propose to do is read a few scriptures, directly or indirectly, related to the Feast of Firstfruits, and then speak about them until about 7.30, and then read a few scriptures about the Feast of Pentecost, and then speak about them until it's time for the meeting to be closed, without closing hymn and prayer. So would you turn, please, to Leviticus chapter 23.

The third book in the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, chapter 23.

[00:03:07] And verse 9, And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye become into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest, and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it, and ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf, and heal him without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord.

And the meat offering thereof shall be two-tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savour.

[00:04:05] And the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hen, and ye shall eat neither bread, nor porched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God. It shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. Matthew, the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 27.

As we read these New Testament scriptures, it's with the intention of translating into Christian terms the lessons that were given in that typical picture form in Leviticus 23 and other Old Testament scriptures. Matthew 27, verse 50.

[00:05:06] Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

The last chapter of Mark, chapter 16.

Mark 16, verse 1.

When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome had bought sweet spices that they might come and anoint him, and very early in the morning, [00:06:04] the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun, and they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away, for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment, and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted, ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified. He is risen, he is not here, behold the place where they laid him. John's Gospel, chapter 12.

I'm glad some of you are writing the scriptures down. None of us, or few of us, will have the mind that can take away all the things that are [00:07:05] read. It would be good to follow them up later on. John 12, and verse 23.

Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.

But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. And lastly, 1 Corinthians, chapter 15. And verse 20.

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [00:08:04] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Verse 45.

It is written, The first man, Adam, was made a living soul. The last, Adam, was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which

is natural is spiritual. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy. And as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. [00:09:11] I'm going to take the liberty, first of all, of assuming that we are all in the good of what we've gone into previously. In other words, we believe, as the New Testament scripture we read last night says, that Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. In other words, we believe that Christ died for our sins. And that we've realized that it is important to devote time regularly to seeing what the Bible says about the way we should live.

And that we are looking for every opportunity of, as the scripture says, growing in grace [00:10:05] and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So I won't go back to that.

I will also take the liberty, since I've read the various related scriptures, of not backtracking all the time to prove what I have to say.

I will be making certain statements because the scriptures I've read give me the confidence, as before God, to say, this is the summary of what the Bible teaches about these things. Now, if I hurry too much, if it's not plain, if you don't quite agree with me, there's all the time in the world after the meeting ends, and we can discuss these things in conversation. [00:11:02] But to make best use of the time available, I will summarize my conclusions. One of the reasons for saying last night that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are closely related, and the second one flows out of and takes character from the first, is in fact the structure of the text. Every now and again in the chapter there's a kind of punctuation which splits the chapter into major sections, and then in between that there are other ways of punctuating what is said in a subsidiary or a minor way.

Now, there is a major beginning at the beginning of the Passover, and there is another major beginning in verse 9 which introduces the Feast of Firstfruits. [00:12:01] There's a minor division between the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that reinforces again that belief on Jesus as the one who's died for our sins is intended by God to bring about a real change in our lives.

Likewise, when we come to tonight's two feasts, verse 9 is a major break. The Lord spake unto Moses saying, verse 23, starting the next major section, which we look at, if the Lord will, tomorrow night, and the Lord spake unto Moses. Now, where I finish reading for the first half of the meeting, end of verse 14, it doesn't make a major break like that. It gives a minor break, and what follows then is as closely related to the Feast of [00:13:07] Firstfruits as the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to the Passover. So number one, the Passover leads into and becomes the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Number three, the Feast of Firstfruits leads into and merges with and becomes the Feast of Pentecost, number four, which takes its character from number three. So we have two pairs, and we are looking at the second pair tonight. Now, from the scriptures that have been read, it's very plain indeed that the major lesson in the Feast of Firstfruits is this.

Jesus, who went to Calvary to die for our sins, didn't stay in the grave.

[00:14:05] He was there by the way the Hebrews calculate days, three days and three nights.

He went to Calvary and was crucified and went into the grave on the day before the Sabbath.

There was the whole of the Sabbath day, and then early in the morning of the day after the Sabbath,

which is the first day of the week, Jesus rose from among the dead. Now, I will just give you a little snippet, the kind of thing you will want to follow up, verse 11 if you look at it, on the morrow after the Sabbath.

Now in Mark 16, we read almost identical words, that that handful of devoted women, disciples [00:15:08] of the Lord Jesus, on the morning after the Sabbath, or as John's Gospel says, on the first day of the week, very early, we learn it was that the disciples went to the tomb where Jesus had been buried, and at first they were perplexed, eventually they were overjoyed, because Jesus was declared by the angel to be risen from among the dead.

The Feast of Firstfruits has this major message. Jesus, the one who was the true Passover lamb, who has delivered us, those who believe on him as Saviour, by the shedding of his precious blood, he didn't stay in the grave, he's alive [00:16:07] from among the dead. Now, the Scriptures we read in the New Testament not only affirm that Jesus was raised from among the dead on the first day of the week, the morning after the Sabbath, the Scriptures also tell us that it is right to speak of him as the firstfruits, the firstfruits of them that slept. And so it is that we have the authority of New Testament Scriptures for looking back into the Feast of Firstfruits and seeing there a little picture of the fact that the blessing that God is going to bring in eventually all over the earth, but initially on a more restricted scale, that depends not only on the death of the Passover lamb, but on the [00:17:08] fact that Christ, who died for us as our Passover lamb, that he was raised from among the dead. How many times in the New Testament we get the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ put together. He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Indeed, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is implied, at least in that other verse that says, He died for all that they which live might not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. [00:18:05] Well, we could peruse the Scriptures and see many examples, but that will have to suffice. We look just at a few of these details in Leviticus 23, verses 9 to 14, and then move on to the Feast of Pentecost. Verse 10, speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them, first of all, words addressed initially to the nation of Israel, things which will eventually be true of the nation of Israel. The promises to Israel at that time were conditional upon their obedience and faithfulness to God. They were disobedient. They were flagrantly unfaithful. [00:19:02] And God had to say, you have proved openly what I've always known, that you are not good enough in yourselves to come into the favor and blessing of God. He said, as a nation, you will be put to one side, and a greater mystery, a greater wonder, a greater blessing will be unfolded. And we shall look at that, if the Lord will, tomorrow and Saturday. Whether it is eventually the nation of Israel, whether it is Christian blessing now, all blessing depends upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:20:05] And so it is right that something that was said to Moses as the basis of their blessing when the right time came, but had to be deferred because of their national disobedience, which still continues. It is quite easy for us to see, in the light of the teaching of the New Testament, that the basis for their blessing in the future is the same basis for our blessing as individual believers now, and for the church as a whole, as we can see. But in verse 10 he says, when ye come into the land, these are matters that can only be rightly understood by those who are in the benefit, those who have been helped to [00:21:03] understand the significance of what has happened. Even though we cannot explain it, it's only when we believe that Jesus died for us and rose again that we can see why it is that all blessing depends upon the personal death and resurrection of Jesus. And I suppose we have the counterpart to being brought into the land of blessing in that we know now that our sins have been dealt with, we are right for heaven, our sins have been forgiven, and we have no fear about the day of judgment. As the scripture says, we have boldness in respect of the day of judgment, it holds no [00:22:01] fear for us because Jesus died and rose again. Now, he says here, when ye come into the land, he says you'll

bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest. If you examine all the statements made about the feast of firstfruits, you will find that there was the Passover which became a week's feast, excluding leaven, but feasting upon unleavened bread. And during that week, if you put all the scriptures together, you'll find that this feast of firstfruits had to be celebrated on the first day of the week in the feast of unleavened bread. One of the things that is an immediate outcome of feasting upon Christ for the good of your [00:23:06] soul is the realization that everything hangs on this, he's the one who was alive from among the dead. And the realization of that makes it possible for those who appreciate that to come to the Lord, to come to God, and to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving in the good of the personal resurrection of Christ. Now, I must leave you to follow up the detail of these offerings.

Think about the fact that the burnt offering is referred to, the meal offering is referred to, a drink offering is referred to.

[00:24:05] There's no reference to a peace offering. There's no reference to a sin offering. We'll see that there is a reference to each of them when we come to the feast of Pentecost, and perhaps it'll be best to leave a comment till then and to link the two together. But I will say now that in the feast of firstfruits, there is that which is immediately possible by way of praise and worship to God because Jesus died and rose again. Altogether, apart from any blessing that you and I might enjoy as Christians, there is that which God is pleased about and has his heart filled with satisfaction about because [00:25:03] Jesus died and rose again. And if you look into the detail of these offerings, you'll find that the Lord Jesus personally, who he is, his faithfulness in going into death, the failure of the grave to hold him, his glory in resurrection, all these things are due cause for praise, thanksgiving, and worship to God, altogether apart from anything that you and I might enjoy. You will look at verse 14, at details like the bread, the parched corn, and the green ears. You will meditate upon that, and you will most likely come to the conclusion, and if [00:26:01] you do, I will agree with you, there are things in the Gospels about the life of Jesus that you cannot understand until you believe that he died and rose again. Unless you believe in his death and resurrection, you are not equipped to understand anything about the perfection of his life on earth. This may be one reason why it is common for us as believers, we get an interest in the New Testament letters and learn Christian truth, and when we've learned the major significance about the value of his death and resurrection, we are given a renewed interest in going back into the Gospels and learning some of the sweet things about the things that happened [00:27:01] in his life that we couldn't understand before. Now, that kind of thing is implied in verse 14.

The significance of his life, things that happened during it, the true significance and value of his death, what it means to the Christian to have Christ personally as spiritual food for the soul, are things we can only enter into when we believe that he died for our sins and was raised by God the Father. Now, for the moment, that's all we'll say about the Feast of Firstfruits, the personal resurrection of Christ attested to at the end of the Gospels as we read and taught in the New Testament epistle. So would you turn back again, please, to Leviticus 23, verses 15 to 22.

[00:28:09] He shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths shall be complete. Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days, and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord, and ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals. They shall be of fine flour. They shall be bacon with leaven. They are the firstfruits unto the Lord. And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, one young bullock and two rams.

They shall be for a burnt offering unto the Lord with their meat offering and their drink [00:29:03] offerings, even an offering made by fire of sweet savour unto the Lord. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the Lord with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest, and ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day that it may be an holy convocation unto you. Ye shall do no servile work therein. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. Verse 22, I will leave and link with verse 23 tomorrow evening, if the Lord will, because it's transitional between numbers four and five. [00:30:03] Now, to save time, those of you who are writing the scriptures down, I've listed the scriptures, and if you'd make a note of them and follow them through later, Luke's gospel, chapter 24, verses 44 to 53, that's the account of the Lord's conversation with the two on the way to Emmaus, Acts 2, verses 1 to 4, which is that amazing happening on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached the gospel, 1 Corinthians 12, verse 13, Ephesians 2, verses 14 to 18, and the epistle of James, chapter 1, verse 18.

[00:31:05] Now, as with the feast of firstfruits, those scriptures are our authority for going on from the feast of firstfruits, speaking of the personal resurrection of Christ, and learning this, in the feast of firstfruits, a sheaf, the first of the harvest, as soon as it was ready, a sheaf was taken, and thanks was given to God because this sheaf, the first one, was accepted by the harvester as God's pledge that the whole harvest would follow. And then, seven weeks and a day later, 50 days, hence the word Pentecost, [00:32:13] which merely means 50, 50 days after the feast of firstfruits, there was another feast, the feast of Pentecost, sometimes called the feast of Pentecost, because it's 50 days, sometimes called the feast of weeks, because it's seven weeks, and you include the first Sabbath, the first day after the Sabbath, and the following one, so that gives you your 50 days, and for something that comes into the text that we'll look at in a minute, sometimes called the new meal offering. Now, it's a matter of fact that in the land of Palestine, the early harvest is the barley harvest, and then that's followed seven weeks later [00:33:09] by the wheat harvest, and this is something that can easily be checked. God, having kept his faithful promise as a good and faithful creator, and bringing in the barley harvest in the month Abib, was accepted as God's pledge that he would add the later harvest too.

When we read in Leviticus, in the Gospels, we see a very interesting and significant item, and it's this. When it was the firstfruits feast, which tells us about the personal resurrection [00:34:04] of Christ, as those other listed scriptures support, it is the barley harvest that is mentioned. When we come to the feast of weeks, and we have the harvest gathered in there, the sheaf of the offering, when the sheaves are brought in there, you find that they are of the wheat harvest. Now, it's interesting there that when the Lord Jesus, in the Gospel by John, talks about the harvest of souls that should be brought in because he was going to die and be raised from among the dead, and go back to heaven, and send the Holy Spirit into the world, the figure that he uses is a corn of wheat, not a corn of barley. And other scriptures there are [00:35:08] that tell us this. The feast of firstfruits tells us that Jesus could not be held in the grave. He rose from among the dead. But the feast of Pentecost tells us that the resurrection of Christ, personally, is the guarantee that a wonderful company, a wonderful group of people were going to be brought into blessing as a result of the death and resurrection of Christ. But that it couldn't actually come into being until Jesus, who died and rose again, went to heaven and sent down his Holy Spirit. Now, there are points within the text which confirm that. And I've listed for you [00:36:10] scriptures like Act 2, which tell us of the coming down into this world of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, on the very day when the national feast of Pentecost was to be celebrated and then actually fulfilled. In that, the Holy Spirit came, empowered the disciples to preach the gospel that

Jesus had died and risen again, and that all who believed on him would be built into what became known as the Christian church. The personal assurance of Christians, the guarantee that the church as such will be taken to heaven by Jesus when he [00:37:08] comes again, is guaranteed to us by the resurrection of Jesus from among the dead.

The feast of Pentecost in Leviticus 23, the things the Lord said to the disciples on the way to Emmaus Luke 24, the way he said to them, to the disciples in the end of the gospel and the beginning of Acts, stay where you are at Jerusalem and you'll be given power from on high, fulfilled in the outpouring and downcoming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. To indwell each individual believer again as the earnest, the pledge, the guarantee that the final full redemption, [00:38:09] spirit, soul, and body, would take place at God's appointed time. 1 Corinthians 12, verse 13, tells us that the real meaning of the term of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is that, as an historical fact, the church, the Christian church, was inaugurated 50 days after Jesus rose again from the dead on the day of Pentecost. Have you ever wondered why, under the old holiday system, that Whitsunday was always seven weeks after Easter Sunday? [00:39:01] Easter Sunday, the first day of the week when Jesus rose from among the dead, the feast of first fruits. Seven weeks later, what became known as Whitsunday, the feast of Pentecost, seven weeks and a day after Jesus rose from among the dead. Now, if the personal resurrection of Jesus is God's guarantee that the church would be brought into being on the day of Pentecost and that the church, as such, would receive the power of the Holy Ghost to glorify Christ, to instruct and empower every believer, and to regulate things in every local church, we also need to see two things. First of all, when you get the first fruits of a harvest, [00:40:07] you look at its quality. You look at it and that tells you what the main harvest is going to be like. The true character and texture of the Christian church is Christ. Not Christ's personally, but as we might say, Christ's characteristically. It's God's intention that the character of Christ should come out, be demonstrated, be displayed in the Christian church. Jesus has gone back to heaven. He rose from the dead. He kept company with his disciples for 40 days. He went to heaven. [00:41:02] Ten days later, 40 plus 10, the Holy Spirit came down. And any Christian who makes an open display of a Christ-like life is only able to do so, and it's God's intention that we do so, because of the power of the Holy Spirit. But there's another thing. If Christ and Christ-like features are reproduced in the lives of believers, it is also true that we have to safeguard that realization by accepting that the Lord Jesus is absolutely perfect, and we, as long as we are here upon earth, will always be less than perfect. Now, in the feast of firstfruits, we are given a little picture of this. [00:42:07] You remember, in the feast of unleavened bread, there was no leaven permitted at all.

Evil to be excluded, consciously so. When we come to the feast of firstfruits, it gives rise, the truth of the resurrection of Christ, following on from the death of Christ, following on from the death of Christ, gives rise to praise and worship to God for all the perfection that there is in Christ personally. But when you check it out, you'll find that there's no reference in the feast of firstfruits to any of the offerings [00:43:03] which include a reference to us as coming into blessing. We can see why. Those offerings which include us include a component of leaven, and therefore couldn't be used as a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, in his earthly life, was absolutely sinless. He died on account of sin, but when he was raised from among the dead, he's completely untainted by sin. He's dealt with sin once and for all. It has left no mark upon him. He dealt with it fully and completely. He's alive from among the dead. He's in heaven, sinless, perfect in every way. When we come to the feast of Pentecost, [00:44:11] this feast that tells us that there is upon earth the church of God, composed of all those who believe that Jesus died and rose again, we find that there is a reference, for instance, to the peace offering. Now, the great thing about the peace offering is that there was something for everybody. You see, look at the detail of the feasts, and you'll find that certain people were allowed to

feast upon the flesh of the offering, other than the burnt offering, which was all for God. But in the peace offering, yes, God got his portion, [00:45:03] the priest got his portion to eat, the offerer got his portion, and there was that element of sharing, having fellowship. There was something for everybody. Now, we get this little reminder, and it comes out also in this reference to the new meal offering. It's in the text there. Leaven was permitted. In fact, the instruction was given that they had to be baked with leaven.

It confirms that when we come to the feast of Pentecost, we are coming to a feast which includes us being brought into blessing as a result of the death and resurrection of Christ, [00:46:01] he personally absolutely sinless. But we believers, as long as we are here upon earth, we are told there is that root of sin, striving to be active, which we have to count as dead as before God, and not let it dominate us in our lives. But as long as we are here, there is always that potential for the root of sin to become the fruit of individual sins, and we need to be on our guard against it. However godly, however devoted we are privileged to be, we will never arrive at a point of sinless perfection while we are here living responsible lives upon earth. Now I think really I cannot go into more detail on this particular occasion [00:47:03] other than refer to verse 19. Yes, verse 16 says ye shall offer a new meal offering unto the Lord.

Verse 19 says ye shall offer a sin offering. Yes, Jesus died and rose again.

He died to fulfill the will of God. He died that fellowship with God might be enjoyed.

But if there was to be a company brought into being, the church, or even an individual, to enjoy the blessing of God, as well as fulfilling the will of God, as well as giving due cause for God to delight in his perfection, it was necessary also if we were [00:48:06] also if we were to be brought into blessing that Jesus died on account of sin. And so we have here in this feast of Pentecost this reference to the sin offering as well as all the others. You see that the climax of the offering, the feast, is that again there is praise to God, there is sacrifice to God, there is worship in the presence of God, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, went into death, dealt with sin, came out of it victoriously in resurrection, he's gone to heaven, he has sent the Spirit, the church was formed on the day of Pentecost, and individual souls will continue to be gathered in until the Lord Jesus Christ comes for his own [00:49:03] to take us to be with himself as he promised, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also. The one who died personally to deal with our sins, the one who was raised by the glory of the Father in glorious tribute to the completeness and perfection of his sacrifice at Calvary, is coming again to receive unto himself those who've trusted him as Savior. And in the meantime, every soul that believes that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin, is built into this wonderful church, this wonderful spiritual vessel which was brought into being on the day of Pentecost. Let us sing a closing hymn, [00:50:06] hymn number 112, tells us about the fact there can only be blessing now or in any day in association with the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose again. This is why the verses start speaking of different aspects of our being associated with him, buried with Christ, risen with Christ, living with Christ, and growing in Christ. Let us sing the hymn 112.