

The Doctrine of the Old Testament Feast Days (or Holy Convocations)

As we have seen in Lev. 23:2, the term *feast days* is a misnomer, applied in popular usage, which distorted their true meanings. We have seen the same in our life where the concept of *holy day* has been replaced with the name *holiday*. The change of the terminology and the change in our perception of the meaning of the day go hand in hand. We are all aware of how the Jews took this system of truth to reveal Who Jesus Christ was centuries before His coming and changed it into an evil system of legalism. We have taken equally meaningful days and changed them into meaningless holidays (Christmas and Easter are prime examples). The actual word here means *appointed time*; just as God has an appointed time for everything in His plan, so He has an appointed time to celebrate and to learn what the future is to be.

Although a portion of this chart was taken from the NIV Study Bible, most of it came directly out of God's Word.

Old Testament Feast Days

Name OT References NT References	OT Time Modern Time	Description and Purpose	Symbolic Meaning
Passover Ex. 12:1–14, 21–27, 48 Lev. 23:5 Num. 9:1–14 28:16 Deut. 16:1–3a, 4b–7 Matt. 26:17 –19 Mark 14:12–26 John 2:13 11:55 1 Cor. 5:7 Heb. 11:28	1st month: Abib 14 March or April	This was Biblically the beginning of the months for the Jews (Ex. 12:2). A lamb was slain and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread in every household (leaven was removed from the house prior to the slaying of the Passover lamb—Ex. 16:14). More importantly, this commemorated the passing over of the death of the firstborn in Israel for those who slapped the blood up upon the door sill. This looked backward to Yahweh delivering Israel from bondage to Israel. The man who was clean and did not observe Passover was to be cut off from his people and to bear [the punishment for] his own sin (Num. 9:13). Aliens could observe the Passover (Num. 9:14). The sacrifice for the Passover was only to occur where Yahweh designated (Deut. 16:5–6). In Egypt, this was done at the major households; however, this was restricted once the Jews entered into the land (Ex. 12:3–6 Deut. 16:5–6). Our Lord's last supper with His disciples was the Passover. In connection to this, <i>the first day of unleavened bread</i> in Mark 14:12 was probably the day before the feast began (as only unleavened bread could be eaten with the Passover). Our Lord changed the Passover into the Eucharist (Mark 14:22–24). The wine and bread taken during the Eucharist, are obviously unleavened (Deut. 16:3–4).	The Passover also looks forward to our Lord, the Passover lamb, sacrificed on our behalf. Recall the chilling passage Ex. 14:5–6: <i>The lamb is to [all of] you an unblemished male a year old...and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel will kill it between the evenings.</i> The blood on the door sills of their original homes in Egypt caused them and their families to be passed over and the first born was spared and represented the bleeding of our Lord Jesus Christ which took place on His hands, His feet and from His head. Jesus is called our Passover in 1 Cor. 5:7. The unleavened bread eaten at the last Passover was our Lord's uncorrupted body and the unfermented wine was His blood of the covenant shed on behalf of many (Mark 14:22–24). Interestingly enough, even though there are three feasts where the men of Israel are required to go to Shiloh (or wherever the Tent and Ark are), this is not the case with the Passover. However, once the Jews entered into the land, they were restricted with regards to where they observed the Passover (Deut. 16:5–6). This would indicate that salvation is completely a matter of freewill.

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Unleavened Bread Ex. 12:15–20 13:3–10 23:15 34:18 Lev. 23:6–8 Num. 28:17–25 Deut. 16:3b, 4a, 8 Matt. 26:17 Mark 14:1 Acts 12:3 I Cor. 5:6–8	1st month: Abib 15–21 March or April	The Passover was to then be commemorated with a week long feast. An assembly was held in at the beginning and at the end of this week-long appointed time and all bread eaten had to be unleavened, as leaven represents corruption of the world. The unleavened bread was the bread of humility (Deut. 16:3). This feast did not necessarily begin on a Saturday or a Sunday. However, no work was to be done on that first and seventh day. This one of the great pilgrimages or regathering feasts of Israel, one of the three when all males were to appear before Yahweh. None were to appear before Yahweh empty handed. The Feast of Unleavened Bread also looked backward to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Several burnt and tribute offerings were presented to Yahweh during this appointed time.	The Jews were given the truth directly from God and they were nationally a light unto the world. Leaven represents corruption and their memorial to the Passover, their witness for Jesus Christ, was to be uncorrupted worship. Scofield writes <i>this feast speaks of communion with Christ, the unleavened wave loaf, in the full blessing of His redemption and of a holy walk. The divine order is beautiful; first, redemption; then, holy living.</i>¹ Passover occurs for a day, just as salvation occurs in an instant of time. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, wherein we have fellowship with our Lord, continues for a longer period of time.
Firstfruits Lev. 23:9–14 Rom. 8:23 I Cor. 15:20–23	Abib 16 March or April	A sheaf of the first of the barley harvest was offered to Yahweh as a wave offering, along with a burnt offering and a tribute offering. The seed dies, is put into the ground, and the first sheaf to arise was the firstfruit of the remaining crop to be harvested later. This originally recognized our Lord's provisions for the Jews in the land.	Being filled with the Holy Spirit and having our own spiritual gift(s) are the firstfruits to us from God, in anticipation of our resurrection bodies. Our Lord, risen from the dead, represents the firstfruits of the resurrection (I Cor. 15:23). Notice how this is long before the celebration of the harvest, as He was raised long before we receive our resurrection bodies. The seed dies, is put into the ground, and the first sheaf to arise was the firstfruit of the remaining crop to be harvested later.

¹ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 156–157.

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Weeks (or Harvest or Pentecost)² Ex. 23:16a 34:22a Lev. 23:15–21 Num. 28:26–31 Deut. 16:9–12 Acts 2:1–4 20:16 1 Cor. 16:8	3 rd month: Silvan 6 May or June	Fifty days after the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread we have the Feast of Weeks where mandatory and voluntary offerings were brought to the Lord, along with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. This is roughly equivalent to the amount of time that it took to travel from Egypt to Mount Sinai. The offerings were burnt offerings, tribute offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings. Two loaves of unleavened bread were also offered along with ten animals. However, leavened bread is allowed as this is our time here on earth. Scofield writes: <i>Observe, it is now loaves; not a sheaf of separate growths loosely bound together, but a real union of particles making one homogeneous body. The descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost united the separate disciples into one organism.</i> ³ It was at this time that the priest emphasized the needy and providing for them (Lev. 23:22 Deut. 16:11–12). This is the second feast where the males of Israel were to gather themselves before Yahweh. Later on, the Ten Commandments and the book of Ruth were read publicly during this feast day. The timing of this feast is quite interesting. The fifty days are seven Sabbaths, (<i>Sabbath</i> means <i>seven</i> and is the Biblical number referring to perfection) and one more day. This places the feast day on a Sunday, which is quite unusual for a feast day. This day appears to just be inserted into the feasts, just as the Church Age is inserted into the Age of Israel. Furthermore, what they brought was interesting—Israelites brought not grain, but the bread which had been made out of the grain, as an offering to God.	This is our life here on earth. Leaven speaks of corruption because we live in bodies of corruption. Our salvation and initial fellowship our past, ultimate sanctification is future, and in between we have this very short amount of time here on earth. That is Pentecost, which is why God chose this day to give us the Holy Spirit. The gleanings of the field which are left behind for the poor is what the sons of Israel left for us and we have been able to feast from the Old Testament since that time. The fact that Pentecost occurs on a Sunday is significant, because the official day of worship of the church is Sunday, as that day commemorates the day our Lord was raised from the dead. Finally, the bread made from the grain which God has given speaks of the transformation by God the Holy Spirit from the raw material into divine production. All of the males were required to attend this feast, as it reminded Israel that, at one time, they were slaves in Egypt, and that God, by a mighty hand, brought them out (primarily, they were to recall that they had been slaves in Egypt—Deut. 16:12). Note that this is a required feast and that salvation is not the issue, but the former status of the Israelites. All Israelites were slaves at one time in Egypt; just as all men are slaves to sin. Therefore, this feast is applicable to all men (as opposed to Passover, attendance at which is a matter of freewill).
Trumpets Lev. 23:23–25 Num. 29:1–6 No NT references	7th month: Tishri 1 September or October	Several months later, we have an assembly of the people replete with trumpet blasts and several burnt offerings. This did not occur on a Sabbath but it was a day of no work for the Jews.	This feast is prophetic and looks far into the future. Notice the great gap between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. Isa. 18:3 27:13 and Joel 2:1–3:21 indicate that trumpets are a sign of the regathering of Israel and their return to Yahweh. Deut. 30:1–10 describes this regathering apart from the feast days.

² The name Pentecost comes from the Greek translation of *fifty days*.

³ *The New Scofield Reference Bible*; Dr. C.I. Scofield; ©1967 New York-Oxford University Press; p. 157.

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Day of the Atonements (Yom Kippur) Lev. 16 23:26–32 Num. 29:7–11 Rom. 3:24–26 Heb. 9:7–9 10:1–3, 19–22	7 th month: Tishri 10 September or October	This particular day is a day involving mostly priestly functions, many of which were not even seen by the people of Israel. We have already spent almost four pages covering these functions. The high priest wore simple white linen clothing, as opposed to his normal more colorful, royal clothing. This involved many sacrifices, and alone, with only incense and coals from the altar and blood, the priest entered into the Holy of Holies several times to sprinkle blood upon the ark of the covenant in the presence of Yahweh. Then they released the scapegoat. ⁴ For the people, this is a Sabbath day of rest and atoning sacrifices. Both the people and the priests had to be cleansed. Insofar as the people went, it was a time for the Jews to think humility (grace-orientation) and to do absolutely no work. Everything was done on their behalf.	This refers to the fact that our Lord one time on one day gave Himself for us and that this sacrifice propitiated God the Father; it satisfied His perfect righteousness. Jesus Christ was presented publicly as a propitiation for our sins (recalled that <i>propitiation, atonement, mercy seat and covering</i> are all cognates in the Hebrew). The change in clothes of the high priest indicates that this is the humanity of our Lord—not His royalty or divine nature—that made atonement for our sins. And right at this moment, we are standing outside of the tabernacle as our High Priest presents Himself before God (Heb. 9:7–9). The Day of Atonement is the permanent, final cleansing of our sins before God. This is when we have final access to the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19). We call it ultimate sanctification, when we are given our resurrection bodies and brought before the Lord on the day of judgement. For Israel, this is a time of mourning and cleansing and is parallel to Joel 2:11–14 and Zech. 12:9–13:1.
Tabernacles (or Booths or Ingathering) Ex. 23:16b 34:22b Lev. 23:33–36a 39–43 Num. 29:12–34 Deut. 16:13–15 Ezra 3:4 Zech. 14:16–19 John 7:2, 37	7 th month: Tishri 15–22 September or October	This eight day week was celebrated by living in temporary shelters. The male Jews gathered and made a pilgrimage on this day. This is where the tree branches were all gathered. A large number of sacrifices were offered on each day (seventy bullocks for the week; two rams, fourteen lambs and one male goat each day) and the people were to gather in a holy convocation to Yahweh. This could be looked upon as an eight day feast, culminating in one last gathering; or a seven day feast followed by a day of an holy convocation to Yahweh. These are separated into two feasts since the Feast of Tabernacles is seven days long (Deut. 16:13). Zech. 14:16–19 tends to give this a prophetic note and include the Gentiles in their worship of Yahweh. Today, Jews only take their meals inside these temporary shelters; they no longer live in them for the full week.	There were a couple of different meanings which are applicable to this feast day. First of all, it celebrates the blessing which God has given to all Israel with regards to their general blessing and prosperity (Deut. 16:15). Because this is a general blessing, and because God caused this prosperity to be enjoyed by all Israel, all of the men were required to attend. This means that they are acknowledging God's general blessing and sustenance to all mankind. On earth, we all live in a temporary shelter, our bodies, until we have been taken up by God.
Sacred Assembly Lev. 23:36b Num. 29:35–38 John 7:37	7 th month: Tishri 22 September or October	One last day of rest and offering sacrifices to mark the end of the three previous appointed times.	Once we have received our resurrection bodies, we are gathered to the Lord one last time forever.

⁴ Later on in Israel's history, the attendant pushed the goat off one of the cliff's outside of Jerusalem—which was not a part of this prescribed ritual.

Summary: It is important to note that these feasts were not spread out evenly or randomly throughout the year, but they occurred in groupings around the same time. The first three feasts speak of our Lord, uncorrupted, dying on the cross on our behalf and of his resurrection, just as a seed is planted in the ground, one of many, and Jesus Christ is the first sheaf to appear in His resurrection body (this is the feast of Weeks). Finally, the regathering of Israel, the final ultimate sanctification which takes place, is illustrated by the last three feasts. All three sets of feasts are separated by time, illustrating the time between the death of our Lord and His resurrection and between His resurrection and the regathering of Israel. Similarly, we find the Feast of Weeks intercalated between the first and the last group of feasts, just as the Church Age is slipped between the times of the Jews.

Addendum: I need to add that although the men of Israel were only *required* to bring themselves before God during three of these feasts (Ex. 23:14–17 34:22–24 Deut. 16:16), this does not mean that the other feasts were not attended, nor does it mean that the sacrifices were offered in odd places other than where the Tent of God was. This will be covered in great detail in Deut. 12:5.