

INTRODUCTION

God has established a profound prophetic system through His choice of 7 holy festivals, or feasts, to be held each year by His people, Israel.

If there is one chapter of the entire Old Testament that the faithful Jew would want to remember, it is Leviticus 23, wherein is found the 7 holy feasts listed in order with instruction. For this message I encourage you to keep this chapter open in your Bible, as we will refer to it throughout.

The symbolism of these feasts is momentous, but today we will focus on 2 aspects of their wonder: (1) their relationship with the sequential ministry of Jesus, and (2) their relationship with the development of the fetus in the womb of a mother. Yes, this is indeed a "Jesus message" and a "mother's day message!"

Believers in Christ are not responsible to keep these feasts, but a knowledge of them will greatly enhance one's faith. And we believers will observe these feasts, in essence, as we celebrate the ministry of Jesus both past, present and future.

The schedule of the Jewish feasts is based on a lunar calendar (as opposed to our present solar calendar) – a 28 day cycle (the same as the women's menstrual cycle). [Note: It takes 27.3 days for the moon to orbit the earth, but 29.5 days to return to the same spot above the earth because of the earth's rotation. So 28 days is in a reasonable averaged figure.] And the beginning of the Jewish calendar is the beginning of spring. And the Jewish day begins at sunset (or moonrise) of the previous day. (Remember in Genesis 1: "and there was evening and there was morning, one day.")

1. PASSOVER

Leviticus 23:5 *In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover.*

Each Jewish month starts with a new moon, reaching a full moon half way through its 28 day cycle. Thus, Passover always falls on a full moon – the first full moon of spring which is the first full moon after the spring (or vernal) equinox – when day and night are nearly the same length – occurring on what we call March 20 or 21.

Historically, the Passover commemorates the night of God's final plague on the Egyptians, pronounced by Moses, when the first born of each household died. However, the angel of death "passed over" the households of the Jews who had put blood on the doorpost of their home, as the Lord had commanded. Passover, then, is the feast of salvation by blood. It is no mere coincidence, then, that our Lord Himself was sacrificed on Passover.

Our Lord fulfilled each feast on its appropriate day with an appropriate action, and we will see that all 7 of the feasts have either been fulfilled or are prophesied to be fulfilled, with reference to their exact meanings.

During A.D. 33, when most historians believe Jesus died, Passover fell on the eve of Thursday through Friday. Jesus ate the Passover meal on Thursday evening and died on Friday at 3 pm.

2. UNLEAVENED BREAD

The second feast begins on the eve of Passover Day, into the next day

Leviticus 23:6 *Then on the 15th day of the same month there is the feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread*

Historically, this feast celebrates Moses leading the escape from Egypt by night, after the Jews had hastily eaten the Passover meal. Eating unleavened bread for 7 days was to remind the Israelites to lead a holy and sinless life, since leaven was a symbol for sin.

The Passover ceremony of breaking and burying and then resurrecting a piece of this unleavened bread (the middle piece, as the Son in the Trinity) very obviously presents the Gospel in the midst of

the modern Jewish Passover celebration. God performed this exact ceremony with the burial of Jesus, our precious piece of unleavened bread - the Bread of Life, and He performed it at the beginning of the exact day of the feast (Friday evening about sunset, A.D. 33).

Whereas crucifixion typically took many days for the victim to die, Jesus died after only 6 hours on the cross, allowing just the time needed to be buried at the beginning of the feast of Unleavened Bread.

3. FIRST FRUITS

The third feast is to be held on the Sunday following Unleavened Bread, to acknowledge the fertility of the land God would give the Israelites. It could be as many as 6 days after, or as in A.D. 33, just one day after – depending on which day the Passover fell. Historically, it was the day Moses parted the Red Sea, delivering the children of Israel from the slavery of Egypt.

Leviticus 23:10-11 *When you come into the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest ... on the day after the sabbath ...*

We have come to call this feast Easter after Ishtar, the Babylonian pagan goddess of fertility. We miss a very important biblical truth by not using the term “First Fruits.” The apostle Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 15:22-23 *For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; after that those who are Christ's at His coming.*

So appropriately, Christ celebrated First Fruits by rising from the dead, parting the “seas” of death. And the additional miracle is that each of us ordinary mortal sinners who have acknowledged the Lordship of Christ will experience this resurrection!

Now we can better understand Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 when he declared of “first importance” the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. These three events were celebrating the first of the three feasts of Israel – exactly fulfilling the purpose of each.

4. PENTECOST

The fourth feast is held exactly 50 days after “First Fruits” to mark the summer harvest. Historically is was the day Moses receives the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai – 50 days after crossing the Red Sea.

Leviticus 23:15-17 *You shall count fifty days for yourself from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering ...*

These two loaves are of equal weight and they are to be baked with leaven, symbolizing sinful men. They are also called “first fruits” which symbolizes that they represent redeemed or resurrected men. In this, God was predicting that the Church would be comprised of two parts, Jew and Gentile.

Of course, 50 days after Jesus resurrected, He returned at the feast of Pentecost in the person of the Holy Spirit, and gathered a harvest of 3,000 souls. Significantly, 3,000 were killed on the day the Law came down from Mount Sinai because of the golden calf. “The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

These are the four feasts for which we have already seen fulfillment. For now, we remain as “workers in the field” until the day of the greater harvest of the next feast, at “Trumpets.”

5. TRUMPETS

The Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah) is the beginning of the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah = “head of the year”), even though the Biblical new year begins in the spring, six months earlier.

Leviticus 23:24 *In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.*

We have skipped over quite a bit of time now from Pentecost. The first 3 feasts occurred in the first month, within a week's time, and the 4th feast occurred 50 days later. Now we go to the beginning of the 7th month on the Jewish calendar which occurs in the fall. This jump in time seems to represent the Church Age in God's planning, since the trumpet certainly represents what we call the rapture of the Church at the sound of the God's trumpet.

This was the feast of the final harvest. The trumpet was the signal for the field workers to come into the Temple. The high priest stood on the parapet of the Temple and blew the trumpet so that it could be heard in the surrounding fields. The faithful would stop harvesting, and if working alongside an Arab, the Arab would stay. This is the image the Lord used in speaking of that day.

Matthew 24:40 *Then there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left.*

The rapture of the Church is clearly associated with the trumpet of God calling His children to Him.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.*

It is not for us to know the exact day and time of the rapture. But with close observation to the association with this feast of trumpets we can have a strong clue. It appears that it will occur on the first day of the Jewish seventh month, meaning that it should occur at a new moon in the fall !!!

When that great trumpet sounds, the great harvest of souls will take place on the feast of the final harvest. The triumph of mighty Joshua at Jericho is a type of the Rapture of the Church. There, the people shouted and blew on trumpets and the walls fell down, and each man "ascended up" into the city. The clincher of the type is in the name of the leader – in both cases "Joshua" or "Yeshua."

The true "new year" for believers will indeed begin on that Rosh Hashanah of the rapture. On our solar calendar, Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah is on the fall equinox of September 20-21. Look up!

6. ATONEMENT

Leviticus 23:27 *On exactly the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall humble [or "afflict"] your souls and present an offering by fire to the Lord.*

9 days after Trumpets, God set aside a national day to focus on repentance and mourning for the sin of the nation. For a 24 hours all were to "afflict themselves" = fast and pray with no work allowed. This was the only required fast for the Jew. Historically this was the day that the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat over the Ark of the Covenant to atone for the sins of the nation. This was and is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar.

We would look in vain in the New Testament for a fulfillment for the Day of Atonement. This is the one feast which is not fulfilled by the Church, because the Church owes no atonement. The Church is not innocent but is exonerated by the sacrifice of its Savior, Jesus. ("It is finished" = "paid in full")

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) will be fulfilled in a wonderful way when the Lord returns at His second coming.

Zechariah 12:10 *I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.*

Zechariah 13:1 *In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.*

And as Paul says in **Romans 11:26** *And so all Israel will be saved just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."*

7. TABERNACLES

Leviticus 23:34 *On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord.*

Leviticus 23:42 *You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths, so that your generation may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*

The Jews had lived in booths (tents) in the wilderness, so God wanted them to remember. The feast of Tabernacles represents the Lord's shelter in the world to come. It is the one feast we are assured will be an important part of kingdom worship in the earthly thousand year reign of Jesus.

Zechariah 14:16 *Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations ... will go up from year to year to worship the King the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feasts of Booths.*

So in the 7 Feasts of Israel laid out in Leviticus 23, there is prophesied 7 critical points in the ministry of Jesus: death, burial, resurrection, return by the Holy Spirit, return at the rapture, atonement of Israel at His earthly return and Millennial reign on earth. Amazing!

THE 7 FEASTS AND THE HUMAN BIRTH PROCESS

There is a most intriguing application of the system of the 7 feasts as relates to the birth process of the fetus in the womb of its mother. Startling as it may be, it appears God's design of the 7 feasts goes beyond the prophetic look into Jesus' ministry and even correlates with the birth of a child. This was first postulated by the well known Jewish believer and scholar, Zola Levitt, known for his CBN, PTL and TNB television broadcasts. Prepare to be amazed once again!

OVULATION (Visual #1) The average pregnancy is 280 days or 40 weeks, counted from the first day of the last menstrual cycle before conception. Birth textbooks tell us "the egg appears on the fourteenth day of the first month." This is called "ovulation." And the 14th day of pregnancy correlates exactly with the Passover which occurs on the 14th day of the first month.

The Jews use an egg on the Passover table as symbolic of the new life they were granted by the sacrifice of the lamb in Egypt. The egg brings the chance of new life – given by the death of our Savior on the cross on Passover Day.

CONCEPTION (Visual #2) The mother's egg must be fertilized by a male sperm within 24 hours or the egg will pass on. Fertilization, of course, is the planting, or dying, of the seed. The death of the "perfect" sperm brings life to the egg.

This perfectly correlates to the "perfect" spotless (unleavened) Bread of Life that was buried on the Feast of Unleavened Bread – 24 hours after the Passover. Through His burial, the Holy seed was "planted" that others might live through His sacrifice.

John 12:24 *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

IMPLANTATION (Visual #3) It takes the fertilized egg from 1 to 6 days to travel down the tube to become implanted in the uterus. This correlates with the indeterminate time between the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of First Fruits. First Fruits might happen the day after Unleavened Bread (as it did in A.D. 33 when Jesus was buried on Saturday (Friday eve) and raised on Sunday. Or it could take longer, depending on the appointed day of Passover.

And how significant is the name "First Fruits" and "implanting!" Implantation is the beginning of the miraculous growth of a human being – the miracle of life. The new implanted egg is the "first fruit" of new life in the womb, just as Jesus was the "first fruit" of resurrected eternal life.

RECOGNIZABLE HUMAN FETUS (Visual #4) Assuredly, from conception the fetus is alive and a child. But textbooks tell us that it is on the 50th day that the embryo is first referred to as a fetus (no longer an “embryo”) because it now becomes fully recognizable as a human. Until then it looks more like a “man from mars” or resembles the fetus of a number of other mammals. But by the 50th day, it becomes, as it were, a “new creature” – recognizably human.

And this correlates to the Pentecost Feast held on the 50th day after First Fruits, when “new creatures” in Christ were born again by the Holy Spirit, initiating the Church.

HEARING CAPABILITY (Visual #5) There are months between Pentecost to Trumpets. Likewise there are months of the fetus’ growing and developing. But again, birthing textbooks tell us that it is about the 24th week, or beginning of the 7th month that a significant milestone is reached - the baby’s hearing becomes fully developed.

Now he or she is able to hear sounds, such as that of the trumpet! So the Festival of Trumpets – a festival of sounds – correlates exactly to the time of the fetus being able to discern sounds! A new communication with the fetus is possible through sound, just as a new communication will occur between God and His Church when Jesus “communicates” in a new way by meeting His Church in the air.

A CHANGE IN THE BLOOD (Visual #6) 10 days into the 7th month of pregnancy there is a critical change in the baby’s blood. For it is necessary for the fetal blood, which carries the mother’s oxygen through the baby’s system, to change in such a way that the baby can will carry the oxygen that it, itself, would obtain upon birth. Technically, the hemoglobin of the blood has to change to that of a self-respiring and blood-circulating human being.

How appropriate and amazing that 10 days into the 7th month of the feasts is the Day of Atonement – the day of the sprinkling of blood for the life of the people. Just as the blood had to be “acceptable” to God, so the blood of the baby had to become “acceptable” for breathing outside the womb. Again, amazing correlation!

ABILITY TO SURVIVE AND FLOURISH (Visual #7) The 7th feast comes just 5 days after the Day of Atonement. And on the 15th day of the 7th month of pregnancy is the beginning of what is called the safe delivery period. The key for safe delivery is having the lungs developed sufficiently to survive, even if born prematurely. But by the 15th of the 7th month this is accomplished in the womb.

The Tabernacle is the House of the Lord, the abode of the Spirit of God, the Breath of God, just as in the breath of life given by the baby’s lungs. So the connection is sustained, eternal life. In God’s Millennial kingdom, symbolized by the Feast of Tabernacles, the believer will both survive and flourish. Likewise, by the 15th of the 7th month the baby will both survive and flourish when delivered.

FULL TERM / CHANUKAH / ETERNAL LIGHT (Visual #8) Though we have come to the end of the 7 feasts, there is still one more feast of God at the 280 day mark in the Jewish year, the same number of days as the average pregnancy. It is Chanukah, the Feast of Eternal Light. And how appropriate, as we close, to note that the very day the baby is scheduled to arrive in the light of day, is the correlated day of the Jewish Feast of Eternal Life, which celebrates our awaited eternity in the presence of God, Light Himself.

Dear Father of Lights, You are indeed amazing, and all the more amazing as we see just a glimpse of your masterwork design in the correlation of the Jewish feasts, Jesus’ ministry and the development of a baby in the mother’s womb. WE WORSHIP YOU!