

## *A Brief Overview*

# God's Seven Annual Holy Days

The Scriptures teach that there are seven annual holy days which were ordained by God to be observed as special commanded assemblies (Lev. 23:2, 4). Step-by-step, these holy days portray God's plan of salvation for mankind. (See the book, *Occult Holidays or God's Holy Days—Which?*)

As originally given to the nation of Israel, God's holy days revolved around the annual harvest cycle and focused on national deliverance and material blessings. Replete with symbolism, the annual festivals were a type (I Cor. 10:11), pointing ultimately to salvation through Christ.

Except for periods of apostasy, God's annual festivals were observed by the children of Israel during OT times (Lev. 23; Deut. 16:1-17; II Kings 23; II Chron. 35; Ezra 6; etc.). In the NT, we find that the apostolic Church faithfully observed these annual high days (Matt. 26:17-18; Acts 18:21; I Cor. 5:7-8). The Scriptures also reveal that all mankind will observe God's holy days after the return of Jesus Christ (Zech. 14:16).

God's holy days take place in three festival seasons—spring, early summer and fall (Ex. 23:14-17). Passover and the seven days of Unleavened Bread occur in the spring; the first and last days of Unleavened Bread are high days, while Passover itself is not. Pentecost falls in early summer. Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day all take place in the fall of the year. Tabernacles lasts seven days, of which the first day is a High Day; the Last Great Day immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Passover** occurs on the evening of the 14th day of the first month (called Nisan or Abib) of the calculated Hebrew calendar (Ex. 12:2, 6). While it is not a holy day, Passover ushers in the spring festival season. The first high day is on the 15th, the first day of the festival of Unleavened Bread, which runs a full week. The last day of Unleavened Bread, the 21st, is also a holy day.

In the OT, Passover was celebrated as an annual memorial of God sparing Israel's firstborn and delivering the nation from bondage in Egypt (Ex. 12). Israel's slavery was a physical forerunner pointing to mankind's spiritual slavery to sin. In the NT, we see the fulfillment of this "type" as Jesus is sacrificed as the ultimate Passover Lamb (I Cor. 5:7). Just as the Passover lamb in the OT symbolized God's deliverance from certain death, Christ, through His sacrifice, has delivered those called into "spiritual Israel"—the Church—from eternal death.

It is evident that Jesus, Who was God manifested in the flesh, instituted the New Covenant Passover—the Christian Passover—on the night of the 14th day of the first month. When Jesus instituted the new ceremony of the Christian Passover, He did not change the day or the frequency of observance. The new ceremony consists of the foot washing, the eating of unleavened bread and the drinking of wine.

Passover reveals the love of God in the giving of His only begotten son to redeem mankind, bringing remission of sin through His blood (John 3:16-17). Through His sacrifice, the New Covenant has been ushered in, promising eternal life. For those under the New Covenant, the Christian Passover is a time of renewal and rededication of one's covenant relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Historically, the seven days of **Unleavened Bread** pointed to the time when God led Israel out of the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:17; 34:18). Spiritually, this festival refers to

God leading the saints out of sin as they strive to become “unleavened”—free of sin (I Cor. 5:7-8). Christians are unleavened in Christ, overcoming sin (leaven) by the power of the Holy Spirit. Walking in newness of life, Christians strive to keep the commandments of God (Rom. 6:4; 7:8).

God gave Israel the Ten Commandments at Sinai on the day of **Pentecost** (Ex. 20). It was also the beginning of God’s Old Covenant “marriage” relationship with Israel (Ex. 19:3-8; 24:8). Anciently, Pentecost was known as the festival of “firstfruits”—celebrating the beginning of the barley/wheat harvest (Ex. 23:16; 34:22). As a physical type, this pointed to the spiritual harvest of mankind by God—the firstfruits of which are the Church (James 1:18; Rev. 14:4).

Under the New Covenant, God’s law is being written in the hearts of Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Heb. 8:10; 10:16). Thus, it was fitting that on Pentecost, 30 AD, the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 2), beginning the Church age—made up of those who would become the firstfruits of God’s Kingdom through the first resurrection.

Pentecost—meaning “count fifty”—is counted from the wave sheaf offering, which occurs during Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:15-16). As the 50th day following seven complete weeks (49 days), Pentecost always falls on the first day of the week.

The fall festival season begins with **Trumpets**, which falls on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24). In the OT, Trumpets pictured a time of war (Zeph. 1:15-16), and thus points to the coming “Day of the Lord”—a time of great calamity and warfare leading to the glorious return of Christ as He triumphs over Satan and the armies of men.

On the 10th day of the seventh month is the day of **Atonement** (Lev. 23:27). Anciently, Israel’s high priest figuratively atoned for the sins of the people on this day with animal sacrifices—particularly with a special sin offering, a sacrificed goat (Lev. 16). Moreover, the blame for such sins was symbolically placed on the head of a living goat, which was then released into a “wilderness captivity.” The living goat pictures Satan the devil, the source of all sin, being removed from power and bound at Christ’s return (Rev. 20:1-3); the sacrificed goat pictures Christ crucified. While Christ’s sacrifice was typified by the slain Passover lamb, His sacrifice is yet to be applied to all the world through the symbolic sin offering of the day of Atonement.

Beginning on the 15th day of the seventh month—as the sixth holy day of the year—is the **Feast of Tabernacles**, or Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34). This seven-day festival pictures the period know as the Millennium—the 1000-year reign of Christ and the saints (Rev. 20:4-6). Only the first day is a high day. The name “Tabernacles” reflects back on Israel’s wandering in the wilderness and points to the temporary nature of this life as saints look forward to the age to come; the designation “Ingathering” points to the fact that the Millennium will be a time when all mankind will be brought to salvation.

Uniquely attached to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles is an eighth day—the **Last Great Day**—the final, seventh high day in God’s plan (Lev. 23:36, 39). While related to Tabernacles, this special day functions as a separate high day. It pointed anciently to the bounty of God’s blessings on Israel. Spiritually, it portrays the “great day” when all who have died without an opportunity for salvation will be raised to a second, physical life in the “second resurrection” and offered eternal life (John 7:37). As an “eighth day” it pictures a new beginning—the time of the new heaven and earth, the new Jerusalem, and the beginning of eternity in the presence of God the Father.