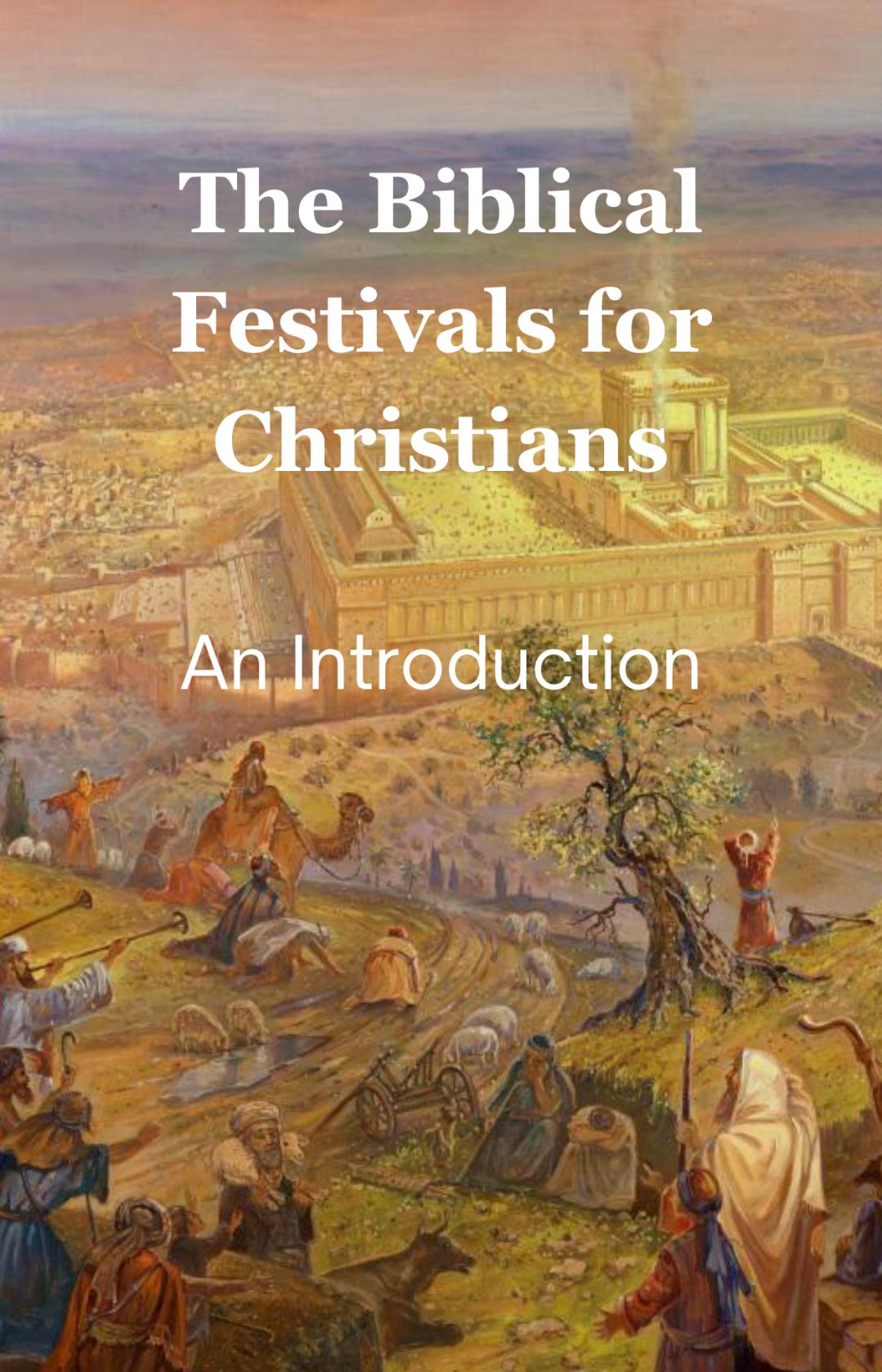


# The Biblical Festivals for Christians

An Introduction



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First edition

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# The Biblical Festivals For Christians - An Introduction

## God's Plan of Salvation Revealed

**W**HAT, REALLY, IS GOD'S Plan for me in my life? How can I know it and Him? Is it just an amorphous "being saved" or through the writings of the Old and New Testaments, did He point the way specifically to how I can learn about and know Him? What is the connection between the "Old Testament" and the New Testament? Didn't the New just replace the Old?

If you are just now learning about God and Christ or are an experienced Christian, you may have some of these questions and many more about how you can come closer to God and know what His Plan is for you and for all people. In this booklet, you will find a few of the answers as demonstrated in the Biblical Festivals that God instituted for His people.

A growing number of Christians are choosing to celebrate the Festivals that they know Jesus celebrated, as they find them written about in their Bibles. As a church, we (the authors) celebrate these Festivals because of our love for the God who gave them and as a regular rehearsal of His incredible plan and His love. They are an absolute joy!

You may be only learning about Jesus Christ, wanting to know more about who He was, how His life applies to you today and whether one can make sense of the events that happened in the

beginning of the Bible through Jesus Christ's life and into the future. Does God have a Plan for humanity and for you? Or is He just winging it?

The great revelation from God is that, yes, He has always had a Plan for you, for me, for everyone. And through His Word - The Holy Bible - He reveals His whole Plan for humanity from the beginning to the end of time. The Festivals are a key to understanding and unlocking the details of His Plan.

The Bible is filled with Festivals – instituted by God for His people – that richly celebrate the history of God's saving acts and His love for His chosen ones. The startling reality is that they weren't just instituted for the ancient people of Israel; they reveal God's Plan for Humanity. These Festivals were kept by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Apostles and the early Church. They have a deep history; from the Calling of God's people in ancient times through to their rich fulfilment at the First Coming of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. When explored in conjunction with the related Scriptures and the Biblical narrative, the details and stories frequently demonstrate how to understand and enrich your understanding of Salvation, the balance between faith and works, how to live a Godly life in Christ and much more. They also point to the time of His promised return to fully establish The Kingdom of God at His Second Coming and on into eternity.

We invite you to read on, in order not to learn some facts and ideas, but to reflect on your relationship with Jesus Christ and Our Father in Heaven.

## **A Very Brief History of The Festivals In Our Times**

For up to three hundred years after Jesus' life and ministry, the Biblical Festivals continued to be observed by many parts of the Church established by Jesus Christ. They were particularly dominant in eastern portions of the Church.

But in the 300s AD they were outlawed by bishops in Rome, who were intent on cleansing any sense of “Jewishness” from the Church.

So for well over 1500 years, other than reading about these Festivals in what Christians now label “The Old Testament”, it was rare to find Christians keeping the Festivals. They were deemed to be somehow contrary to God’s will or “legalistic” or not conveying the Gospel story and therefore deemed to be superseded by festivals instituted by the church authorities in Rome hundreds of years after Christ’s coming.

But that is all changing.

## **The Times They Are A-Changing**

Through the course of the latter 19<sup>th</sup>, the 20<sup>th</sup> and now the 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, Christians from different denominations all over the world have spontaneously found in these Festivals the rich meaning that God built into them, the meaning that floods the Scriptures; about the promise of life, the gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ and the promise of His coming Kingdom to fill the earth and the heavens. They have been rediscovering the real Jesus – in all His ways – and joyfully connecting to the many things in His life as Saviour, Son of David, Son of Abraham, Son of Man and Son of God.

For more than 60 years, many members of our church have been keeping the Biblical Festivals as part of their annual worship and celebration of Jesus Christ and God’s Plan of Salvation for all humanity. These Festivals form the backbone of the annual calendar of *Living Waters Church of God* in Perth, Western Australia.

## **Not A Requirement For Salvation, But Teaching About Salvation**

Before anything else, please note that we do not contend that observing the Festivals is a requirement for Salvation, nor that their observance is necessary to be considered Christian. Faith in and obedience

to the will of Jesus Christ and His clear instructions characterise Christians, not days.

We consider these Festivals to have been instituted by God, however, not just for the benefit of Israel but for all mankind, just as the Messiah came first to Israel and then to all nations. The various Festivals foreshadow, rehearse and teach *about* Salvation. They are integral to the events and message of the New Testament and prophecy in the Old and New. For example: Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of the Passover; the Church started on the Day of Pentecost; the book of Zechariah clearly states that the world will keep the Feast of Tabernacles at the full establishment of The Kingdom of God and the return of Jesus as King of Kings.

The Kingdom of God is not about the observance of days, but faith in Christ and God our Father. It is this faith, therefore, that drives our joyful participation in and celebration of the Biblical Festivals.

This brief booklet is intended as an introduction to the Festivals for Christians, or those coming to Christ, who wish to learn more about God's Plan revealed in His Word through the Festivals.

# The Festivals in Brief

**W**E FIND THE BIBLICAL Festivals summed up in two major passages: Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16.

Here are the 7 Major Festivals:

1. Passover
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread
3. Pentecost
4. Feast of Trumpets
5. Day of Atonement
6. Feast of Tabernacles
7. The Last Great Day

We also find shorthand labels to group or refer to these Festivals. You will find some of these names in both the Old and New Testaments:

1. The Passover Season – both Passover & Unleavened Bread
2. Unleavened Bread – both Passover & Unleavened Bread
3. Spring Festivals or Holy Days – Passover & Unleavened Bread
4. The Festival of Weeks – Pentecost
5. “Fall”/“Autumn” Festivals – Trumpets to The Last Great Day
6. Simply, “The Feast” – almost always the Feast of Tabernacles and The Last Great Day combined
7. The Holy Days, High Days or High Sabbaths

There are references to all of the Festivals spread throughout the entire Bible. Yes, the New Testament as well. In fact, there are many crucial dates around Jesus' life and ministry that hinge on the events that occurred during the Festivals. You really cannot fully understand what was happening or is written without understanding the nature of the Festivals.

# The Meaning of the Festivals

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”*

– 2 Timothy 3:16

After His Resurrection, Jesus was walking *incognito* on the Road to Emmaus with two disciples. They were confused and dismayed by the events of the past few days of Passover and Unleavened Bread. He began to speak to them and explain all of those things pertaining to the Messiah in the Scriptures (Luke 24:13-35). Jesus' death was foreordained from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). God did not suddenly improvise the idea in 4 BC. His Word is Testament to His Plan of Salvation throughout the Bible.

From the opening chapters of Genesis all the way through the Old Testament and then all the way through to The Book of Revelation, God had planned for Jesus' incarnation, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection and return.

God's Word never returns to Him empty. As the epistle to the Hebrews amply demonstrates, it's only logical that the various institutions and days that God appointed for Israel – the soil in which the Messiah grew – pointed to a much greater fulfilment of the Plan He had from the foundation of the world.

The Festivals, as part of God's written Word, clearly depict the events of Salvation from the earliest days of God's work with humanity through Jesus' First Coming, the prophecies of His Second Coming, the establishment of His Kingdom and the Great White Throne Judgement. The symbolism of these Festivals is repeated throughout the New Testament all the way to the astonishing replication of details in the Book of Revelation.

There's a fascinating point at the launch of the Church on the Day of Pentecost, when all the disciples were speaking miraculously in a way that everyone attending heard them in their own languages. You'll find the recount at the beginning of Acts 2. They were speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And what was it the disciples talked about? Those who listened said what it was they heard:

"We hear them speaking in our own tongues *the wonderful works of God.*" – Acts 2:11 (our emphasis in italics)

And that's what the Festivals are all about – rehearsing, remembering and announcing the wonderful works of God!

Jesus said that man is to "live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4; taken from Deuteronomy 8:3). We at *Living Waters Church of God* take those words seriously as we try to live by all the things that God has made clear through the Writers, Prophets and Apostles in the whole of Scripture.

# The Character of the Festivals

THE FESTIVALS WERE JOYOUS occasions, broken only by the solemnity of elements of the Passover and by The Day of Atonement.

The Festivals were accompanied by commands from God – yes, commands – for His people to be joyful, to enjoy food, to use a whole 10% of their annual income to go up to Jerusalem 3 times a year and celebrate before Him. That is, the people were “commanded” to have a great time! The Festivals were intended to be times of “rejoicing before the Lord your God”.

As such, they were intended to form the backbone of community and worship of the Lord in ancient Israel throughout the year. All were equally expected to find enjoyment in the Festivals. From the poorest to the richest, all were expected to participate or send representatives, take time off and share in the blessings that God gave them throughout the year.

The Festivals culminated in the incredible 8-day long Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day: over a week devoted to fun, family, celebration, joyful community and worship before God, centred in the Holy Capital City of Jerusalem. On the specific “High Days” or “Holy Days”, there were “commanded assemblies” for the people to come and worship before God, hear the readings of the Scriptures and give their offerings to God.

The Passover is different in its level of solemnity and conduct. The Day of Atonement is a day of fasting, requiring the people to

humble themselves before God on the occasion of one of the most Holy events of the year.

These Festivals were God's marking apart of time (in addition to the weekly Sabbath) for His people to focus on Him by commemorating and celebrating His miraculous works and His continuing blessings.

As we have followed God's instructions in our church tradition, we have found the Festivals to be occasions of deep connection to God's "salvific history" (the history of His Salvation). Throughout the year, they reinforce for us God's gifts in the past, the present and for the future when Jesus comes as King of Kings over the earth. We have built deep binding relationships together in fellowship and faith, through joyous and happy celebrations of the wonderful spiritual and physical blessings that God has given us through Jesus Christ. We have found the celebration of these days a wonderful and very specific reminder of God's Plan that keeps us from turning to the fables and myths of men.

# The Timing of the Festivals

THE FESTIVALS WERE INSTITUTED by God according to a calendar (called today the Hebrew calendar) kept by Israel and Judah. The Worship Calendar was given through Moses and the priests at the institution of the First Covenant at Mt. Sinai. The months and dates are specifically mentioned in the Old Testament. The precise methods for calculating these months are not provided in the Scriptural record, but were passed down and maintained through the priests and rabbis.

How do we know they are the same timing today?

As of Jesus' time, He clearly followed and kept these Festivals according to the instructions of the priests. For some centuries beforehand and continuing for the millennia since Jesus Christ, there have been ample written records for the basis of the calendar calculations. These calculations are exquisitely precise in their prediction of the phases of the moon and solar cycles, from the central point of Jerusalem. Jesus pointedly affirmed the role and responsibility of the priesthood and the scribes in maintaining the oracles and religious governance of God's Law, as Paul later affirmed in his writings. The Jewish people have continued to maintain an unbroken line in the maintenance of the calendar throughout the centuries. Thus we can trace a direct line to Jesus' original observances and affirmation of those days.

In other words, it was good enough for Jesus so it's good enough for us.

One last note on timing: The Biblical period of the day begins at sunset, in darkness, dawning into the light of day and concluding at sunset of the following day, as described in Genesis 1.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, when you see dates listed for the Festivals, they correspond to our calendar's daytime, but begin the evening before.

For example, 14 Abib/Nisan on the Hebrew Calendar may be stated as April 5 on our Roman calendar, but begins at sunset the evening before – April 4 on our calendar – and concludes at sunset on April 5.

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1. The reckoning used by most of the world – from midnight to midnight – originated in the Roman calendar and has spread around the world. That Roman Calendar is now called the Gregorian Calendar, as it was revised by a Papal Bull (edict) of Catholic Pope Gregory XIII instituted in 1582.

# The Passover

THE PASSOVER – *PESACH* in the Hebrew – was instituted by God at the time of Moses and the captivity of God’s people, Israel, in Egypt. Through the momentous events of the Passover, God was to liberate His people (Exodus 11-12; Leviticus 23). In an even greater manner, Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of the Passover, giving His life so that all humanity might be saved from sin and death through reconciliation to God and might receive the gift of eternal life from the Father (John 3:14-18).

The Israelites were to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and put the blood of the lamb on their door frames. In this way, they marked the faithful homes obeying the Lord’s instructions, so that His angels would “pass over” their homes while enforcing the deadly plague that came on the enslavers of Egypt. The Israelites were to then eat the lamb during that night as part of their Passover meal.

At His Passover with His disciples, Jesus instituted the New Covenant. He washed His disciples’ feet and then commanded them to do the same to one another after His departure. He then introduced the symbols of the unleavened bread and wine, representing His body and blood shed for mankind, and commanded that they should commemorate His death in remembrance.



*Christ washed His disciples' feet at the Passover and commanded them to do likewise*

Unlike the Passover meal celebrated by Israel, the Apostles taught that the symbols of the Covenant – also called “The Lord’s Table” (I Corinthians 10:21) – were not to be included as part of a regular meal. Believers were instructed that if they were hungry they were to eat beforehand, not fill themselves on the unleavened bread and wine (I Corinthians 11:23-33). That is why most churches restrict the ceremony to consuming small portions of unleavened bread and wine.

Following Jesus’ Passover meal and then His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was arrested. His sham trials and brutal torture were conducted throughout the night. Jesus died on the Cross later that same day as the Lamb of God (John 1:29; I Peter 1:18-19), during the afternoon of 14 Abib/Nisan. He was buried in the tomb hurriedly before sunset – before the commencement of the Holy Day Sabbath which was the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Once the High Sabbath commenced, those who loved Jesus would not be allowed to do the work of burial as it was a day of strict rest, hence their urgency.

Historically, Israel had been commanded that once they were settled in the land, the Passover was one of three times a year when they were to “go up to Jerusalem” to celebrate before the Lord (Deuteronomy 16:16). Because of this pilgrimage, Passover became an incredible highlight and gathering for the people. Thus hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of people were present in Jerusalem for the events of Christ’s crucifixion.

So the Passover becomes the remembrance of the most critical event in history: God “passing over” the death penalty that comes through sin, as Jesus took the ultimate penalty for sin on Himself. In this way, He saved His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). The Lord’s Passover has become the commemoration of the institution of the New Covenant between God and those born again of the Spirit through faith, repentance and baptism in the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit by the shed blood of Jesus, The Messiah.



*The unleavened bread and the wine introduced at Christ's Passover*

In many eastern nations, the Hebrew word *Pesach* for Passover is still reflected today in their languages as they celebrate the Lord’s crucifixion. Not calling the period “Easter” as the Western Roman and Protestant churches do (which is an extra-Biblical term), they call it *Pascha* (the Aramaic version) or some such variation which is clearly “Passover”.

The amazing foreshadowing of the symbols and instructions of the original Passover meal, combined with the example of Jesus

Christ and the actual events of that day remain an ever-deepening source of instruction, consolation and encouragement in the faith.

As the remembrance of Jesus Christ's institution of the New Covenant of His blood, His suffering, crucifixion and burial, the Passover is regarded as the holiest of events in the Christian Worship Calendar.

## For Your Reflection

- What does the Passover and its symbolism show me about how Jesus saves?
- What does it demonstrate about how I can be part of the Body of Christ?
- Do I seriously desire the Salvation represented in the symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ?

# The Feast of Unleavened Bread

THE PASSOVER IMMEDIATELY PRECEDES the commencement of the season of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. As it is central to the season, the entire season is also just simply called “Passover” in the Bible.

The First Day is a “Holy Convocation” and High Sabbath or “Holy Day”, meaning the people were to assemble together and keep the day as devoted to God. The date was the 15<sup>th</sup> of Abib/Nisan, the day *after* Passover. The Last Day is also a Holy Convocation and High Sabbath (Leviticus 23:6-8; Numbers 28:17-25).

In the time of Israel, they were to put out all leavened bread during the Festival and eat unleavened bread during the period. It was called “the bread of haste” as it is the kind of bread one makes to bypass the longer leavening and baking processes. They would need that bread on their journey out of Egypt.



This 7-day period encompassed all the events of the Passover through their departure from Egypt to their entrapment before the Red Sea and triumphant crossing ending in the destruction of the pursuing armies of Egypt.

In the New Testament, The Unleavened Bread was labelled by Christ as representing His own body and eternal life (John 6:25-59) and is commemorated in the symbols of the New Covenant (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 11:24-26).

Many members of our church commence the Unleavened Bread Festival with an evening meal including family and guests, remembering the stories of God's Salvation. This is in echo of the Passover meal commanded for the Israelites and allows us to celebrate Salvation through Christ together in a wonderful family meal that invites others to celebrate and share together. In our family and church, we name it "The Night To Be Much Observed" as commanded to ancient Israel (Exodus 12:41-42).

The complete Festival of Unleavened Bread lasts 7 days, encompassing the remembrance of Christ's Crucifixion, Resurrection and appearance to His disciples.

Because millions were on pilgrimage to Jerusalem during this season, they were aware of the astounding events surrounding Christ's crucifixion and resurrection (Luke 24:13-24). So the Feast of Unleavened Bread ties in intimately with the witness of Jesus' sacrifice.

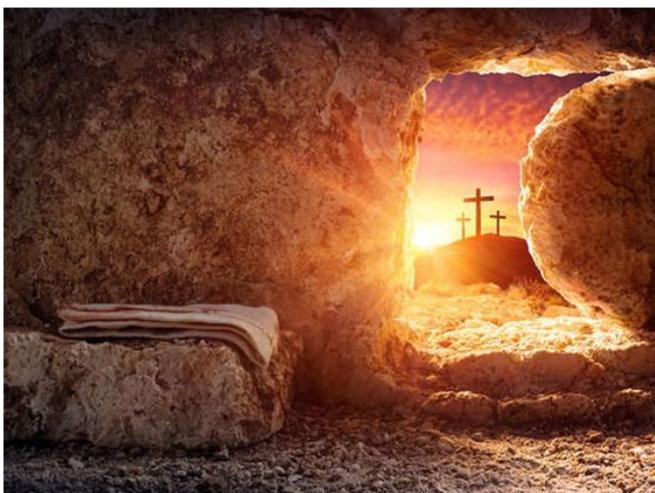
The symbols of unleavened bread are transformed for Christians. They represent taking into the lives of believers the life of Christ Himself – that is, the Spirit and Righteousness of Christ. The Apostle Paul, employing the symbolism of The Feast of Unleavened Bread, says to the church in Corinth, "Therefore let us keep the Feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:8). Rather than dismissing the Old Testament Festival, he was pointing to its fulfilment and continuing relevance for all Christians under the New Covenant.

An understanding of the Biblical Holy Days in the narrative accounts of the Gospels helps one to understand the timing of the events of the Crucifixion. What otherwise appears to be a confusing set of promises and timings and is difficult to understand within a Friday-Sunday morning timeframe. For example:

- Jesus predicted He would be three days and three nights in the grave (Matthew 12:40);
- He celebrates the Passover, following which would be a Holy Day (Luke 22:1 onwards);
- He then is sent to trial and then tortured (Luke 22 through 23);
- He is crucified in the daytime later that same day, is taken down and buried before the sunset beginning the Holy Day (John 19:31,42);
- the women are required to rest on the Sabbath;
- they then have to buy and prepare the burial fluids, which was time-consuming (Mark 16:1);
- they later rest on a Sabbath AFTER preparing the materials (Luke 23:56);
- then the women go to the tomb while it is still dark to find that Christ has already risen (John 20:1).

The events all become clearer when we realise that there could be a Holy Day Sabbath AND a different, regular, Sabbath day during the week. This is something most Christians, not having been taught nor having read the details of the Biblical Festivals, do not understand.

In other words, understanding the Holy Days and their relation to the weekly Sabbath helps us to reconcile the Gospel accounts and see that Jesus was, indeed, dead in the tomb for a full 3 days and 3 nights as He had predicted. Although these details need not affect someone's faith in Jesus Christ, they do point to the great integrity of the Biblical accounts.



It is worth noting that the Wave Sheaf Offering occurs during the Unleavened Bread Festival. It was never commanded as a general assembly or High Sabbath for Israel so is not formally observed by us as a church service. The Offering was always a private ceremony for the priests to conduct, during which the first fruit was “waved” before heaven as an offering to God. This occurs on the Sunday morning after the regular Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Calculating the timing of Jesus’ death and the occurrence of the Holy Days with the resurrection narrative, we can conclude that the Wave Sheaf Offering coincides with Jesus’ own ascension to heaven after His resurrection, when He presented Himself before the throne of heaven as the firstfruit of Salvation and the new born-again family of God. There are Christians who appreciate the Biblical Festivals who therefore have also taken to observing this fulfilment with worship and prayer or church services.

So for 7 days our church commemorates the entire cycle of Christ’s Salvation on the days on which those events occurred, complete with the recall of God’s other great acts of Salvation, pointing forward to Christ, rich with symbolism and history that we won’t even attempt to go into here.

The events of Christ's ministry fulfilled within the Passover/Unleavened Bread period include:

- Christ's appearances in the Temple at Passover
- The Lord's Passover
- The institution of the New Covenant
- Christ's vigil in the Garden
- Jesus' arrest, trial and beating
- The Crucifixion
- Christ's death and burial
- The 3 days and nights in the tomb
- The disciples' mourning
- The glorious Resurrection
- Jesus' ascension & presentation to the Father in Heaven
- The indwelling of the bread of life in the life of believers
- Conversion from sin and death to righteousness and eternal life
- The joy of Salvation through the Resurrection
- Deliverance by God's high hand and mighty miracles
- The ultimate delivery from this world into God's promised land

It's almost incredible the amount of detail God built into His Scriptures – in what they pictured of Salvation by His hand and through His Son.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a fun and exciting period, including gentle symbols and acts that commemorate God's many acts of Salvation throughout history and in the lives of believers. It is a memorable reminder for families of believers and the church throughout the season.

## For Your Reflection

- Do I understand the significance of the Bread of Christ?
- What do I allow to creep into my life that should be put out?
- Is the bread and body of Christ important to me every day of the week?

# The Feast of Pentecost

PENTECOST (FROM THE GREEK *Pentēkostē* meaning “50<sup>th</sup> day”) is celebrated 50 days after the end of the first Sabbath (Saturday) during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. It therefore always occurs on a Sunday. It is also called “The Feast of Weeks” because it is the only day calculated not by a specific date on the calendar, but by counting a number of weeks (7, the number of perfection) after the Sabbath during Unleavened Bread. It comes in the third month, so is not one of the Spring Holy Days.



This is the anniversary of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the disciples at the true commencement of the Church, recorded as occurring on this day in the Book of Acts (Acts 2). The disciples had been instructed to remain in Jerusalem after Christ had walked among them during a 40-day period after His resurrection, after

which He then returned to heaven. They were together for the Day of Pentecost, which was the Biblical Festival celebrating the Spring Harvest – a smaller, yet significant harvest for the people.

On that day, as promised, the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and the Spirit-led Church of God was born.

Astonishingly, again, we are reminded that God planned the Holy Days of the Bible to be fulfilled in the events and after-events of Jesus' life and ministry.

Pentecost is the anniversary of the founding of the church, celebrated throughout Christianity. There can be no denying its fulfilment and purpose.

By Jewish tradition, Pentecost was the day the Israelites received God's Law through Moses on tablets of stone.

After Christ's Ascension, Pentecost became the occasion of the writing of the Law of God in the very hearts and minds of His new people, the Church (Jeremiah 31:33).

Because it was a commanded pilgrimage, there were hundreds of thousands present at and around the Temple when the Spirit came upon the disciples. That's why 3,000 Jews from many nations were called by God to be baptized that very day (Acts 2:41) and thousands more in the ensuing days (Acts 4:4).

Our celebration is timed as per the original instructions and dates. As a consequence, sometimes our celebration concurs with the Gregorian calendar and often it does not.

The celebration of Pentecost thus becomes a literal celebration of the ingathering of God's first harvest of believers and gift of the Holy Spirit for Salvation.

Again, the symbols, traditions and histories associated with Pentecost provide rich learning and instructions for Christians on whom has come the Holy Spirit of God.

## For Your Reflection

- Is God's Law written into my flexible, warm heart and mind or is it just on a stone tablet in my head or on my wall?
- How important is the Church to me?
- Am I blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit?
- How much do I value the gift of the Church and the Spirit?

# The Feast of Trumpets

**T**HIS WAS AN ANCIENT memorial of the blowing of Trumpets. The Feast of Trumpets was a sacred assembly on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Tishri, the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Calendar. It marked the beginning of the civil year, in the same way that many countries start the financial year on a different date than the calendar year.



As the start of the civil year Trumpets was the call from God at the start of a new era.

This Festival is understood as a “memorial in advance” regarding The Second Coming of Jesus Christ, who will return with a mighty trumpet blast as Jesus Himself promised, recorded in the Gospels and in the Book of Revelation. It marks the new era of the Kingdom of God over all the earth when Jesus will reign as King of Kings.

The Apostle Paul noted that Christ would return from heaven “with the trumpet call of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Matthew 24:31), when the saints (believers) will rise to meet Him as they are changed into immortal spiritual children of God at the First Resurrection. The many momentous events of that day – **The Day of the Lord** – are described in detail in many Biblical prophecies, including the Book of Zechariah and the Book of Revelation (see Revelation 8 & 9). The blowing of Trumpets by the angels announcing the judgements of God are also central to the events described.

Thus, the Feast of Trumpets is celebrated with an eager expectation of the Day of the Lord – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the First Resurrection and all of the fabulous events promised by God.

As an annual observance, Trumpets helps keep our eyes fixed on the Hope of His Return (I Thessalonians 1:10).

As a Holy Convocation, where one is invited to celebrate before the Lord, we hold Worship Services then share a meal afterwards, enjoying the fellowship we have with one another in Christ, celebrating His Return in advance.

Intriguingly, there are indications that Trumpets may also be the time of Jesus Christ’s first coming – that is, of His birth. Most Christian denominations acknowledge that December 25 is not the actual date of Christ’s birth. There are a number of scriptures and ancient texts, however, that indicate that the September-October period may have been the actual timing of Christ’s birth. Although Christ’s birth was an occasion for joy in heaven, it was only witnessed as a private family event and not commanded to be celebrated in Scripture, nor was the date of His birth made clear. We note this possibility and use the Fall Festivals to celebrate both Jesus’ First Coming through His birth as a human child and His prophesied Second Coming as King of Kings.

## For Your Reflection

- How important are Christ's Comings to me - First and Second?
- Do I really believe that Christ will return?
- Do I deeply desire, anticipate, rehearse and celebrate that Second Coming in advance of His return or is it just "ho hum" to me?
- How awake and how much of an alarm (a trumpet) does God need to sound in my life?
- Do I understand the implications of His planned return and how that impacts my salvation?

# The Day of Atonement

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT – *Yom Kippur* in the Hebrew – is famous as a day of fasting. Unlike every other Holy Day, God required His people to humble themselves by refraining from eating and drinking throughout the day.

*Why?*

Because on this day, they fasted and prayed as the High Priest was to enter the holiest place of the Temple – The Holy of Holies where God dwelt through the *Shekinah* glory (a mix of cloud and flame) that filled that space. It was death to enter at any other time. The High Priest was even tied to a rope so he could be dragged out in case He died while within the Holy of Holies.

A special ceremony that entailed the symbolic laying of the sins on behalf of ALL the people on one goat for sacrifice and then sending another out into the wilderness is rich with symbolism that would take too long to explore in this pamphlet.



Fasting was an act of self-humbling as the people were to seek God with all their heart, spirit and body (see Isaiah 58).

The physical Temple, however, was always only a shadow of the reality of the Throne of Heaven and Christ as the final High Priest for

His people (see the Epistle to the Hebrews). The Temple system was clearly discarded and rendered obsolete by Christ and His sacrifice. That discarding was finalised by the Temple's destruction during

the first century AD. The acts that were performed in the Temple, however, are fulfilled in reality at God's throne. Roughly the first third of the Book of Revelation replicates many of the ideas and ceremonies of the Day of Atonement – in exquisite detail – but have been made reality in heaven itself, the true Holy of Holies. There are aspects of this Holy Day that Christ has already fulfilled and aspects that the Book of Revelation makes clear are yet to be fulfilled.

Observing this day is once again filled with rich symbolism, self-examination, meditations on God's justice and mercy, His forgiveness of sin through the ultimate sacrifice of Christ and a re-dedication of all the people to God. This pictures the dedication of all peoples on the earth after the Return of Jesus Christ.

Our members choose whether to fast on this day, but nevertheless it is always recommended that those who are young, pregnant or frail not place themselves at even slight risk by fasting. Fasting is a process that Christ stated His disciples would undertake, but it is not to be undertaken lightly or ill-advisedly.

In light of the Old Testament principle of fasting, it's the one very different High Day where we do not share a meal. Of course! And this reminds us of Jesus' words that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God and that Jesus is the true bread of life come down from heaven (Matthew 4:4; John 6:63).

## For Your Reflection

- Do I really mean it when I say I am ready to give up everything for God?
- What will Christ need to do to redeem to God a world that has driven itself to a horrible state of rebellion and chaos?
- How does God's plan of redemption for the whole world impact my life with Him and my relationship to both Him and the world today?

# The Feast of Tabernacles

**T**HIS IS “THE FEAST” – seven days of celebration before the Lord.

God commanded His people to take a whole tithe – one tenth – of their “increase” (their material growth in goods and harvest) for the year to rejoice before Him, such was the importance of this Feast.



The Feast of Tabernacles, along with Passover and Pentecost, was a commanded pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Possibly millions crammed in and around Jerusalem at the time of Christ to celebrate this awesome Festival.

The people were to erect tabernacles – that is, temporary tents or dwellings – as a picture of their transitory life on the earth, remembrance of Israel’s wanderings and reminder of their reliance on God.

The First Day was a Holy Day and the rest pure celebration including the giving of offerings and sacrifices every day at the Temple.

It was at the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus stood up at the Temple to teach, alarming the leaders and astonishing the crowds (John 7:1-19). It was an astonishing moment and one of the many we celebrate with relish during this time.

We celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with many church services – giving spiritual and financial offerings to the work of God – and share in many activities, meals and celebrations of God's love and promises.

The Tabernacles are temporary dwellings where we may stay during the Festival. A growing number of Christians enjoy emulating the Old Testament practice by constructing booths/tents in their own dwellings. Christian Festival sites may also do this as a display and reminder of the themes of the Festival. The Tabernacle themes include that God dwelt – the same word as 'tabernacled' – with us in the flesh in Jesus Christ. His was a temporary physical life, given over as a ransom for many. Likewise, our lives are temporary and we 'tabernacle' here in this present age, awaiting the true Kingdom of which we are permanent citizens. And we are to live our lives as Christ demonstrated and commanded us to live.

We picture the full establishment of the Kingdom of God during the 1,000 years that He promised in the Book of Revelation (20:1-6) as Jesus Christ, King of Kings, reigns over the earth during an unprecedented time of peace and prosperity for all mankind. The enemy, Satan, will have been removed as an influence. God will shower His blessings on a redeemed Israel and world.

Zechariah prophesies that after the return of the Messiah, ALL nations will be required to send representatives to Jerusalem to keep the Feast Of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19). There is no doubt that this season will be on everyone's liturgical calendar in the future!

The amazing mixture of rich messages, hymns and praise, prayers, joyful meals, activities and celebrations as we picture that coming Kingdom are the exciting highlight of the year. There's simply nothing like gathering with your church family wherever they come from, having that instant connection and joy knowing that together we are

rejoicing before the Lord, hearing and following His Word, eagerly anticipating His Kingdom.

That's why it's simply called "The Feast".

## For Your Reflection

- Have I realised the physical, tangible impact of the Kingdom He has promised?
- Do I tend to "spiritualise" God's promises away?
- What would "His Kingdom on earth as in heaven" look like?

# The Last Great Day



APPENDED TO THE FEAST of Tabernacles is one last day – the 8<sup>th</sup> Day or Last Great Day. On this Great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood in the Temple and cried aloud that those who would come to Him could have living waters flow out of them (John 7:37-39).

This Day foreshadows the Great White Throne Judgement to come at the end of the 1,000 years of the Millennial Kingdom of God. God will resurrect all peoples throughout time and offer them Salvation, as Jesus Christ had cried out. In His mercy The Father will save those who come to Jesus in faith. Those who refuse will be sent to their merciful punishment of eternal death.

The whole Earth and Heavens will be renewed. There will be no more sorrow, nor tears, nor crying. The New Jerusalem will descend from Heaven as God brings Heaven together with Earth and the liv-

ing waters that Jesus spoke of will flow out from the New Jerusalem to all the world and all the universe (Revelation 20-22).

This is the last Holy Day of the calendar. It is appropriate that this last day looks forward, stretching out through the rest of the year, just as the Great White Throne Judgement leads us forward to God's whole recreation and continuing Kingdom to last for the rest of time.

What an awesome day it is, filled with the hope of the glorious future for all Creation.

## For Your Reflection

- Knowing that God will judge all people, how do I respond today?
- Which side will I be on when that day comes?
- How ought I to pray and work for others in anticipation of that day?
- How can I praise God for His incredible plan and promises?

# THE PLAN OF GOD COMPLETE

**Y**OU CAN SEE THAT through the Biblical Festivals, in the light of Christ's coming and the witness of the Apostles, Christians have reminders and foretastes of God's complete Plan of Salvation in Christ, from Genesis through to Revelation. God truly foreshadowed so many exquisite details regarding Jesus Christ and God's plan for all humanity throughout the Scriptures.

This Primer only begins to scratch the surface of the meaning and import of these Biblical Days.

In addition to weekly gatherings, these many Festivals help us to focus on God's great love, mercy, wisdom and power. We are reminded of the truth of God's Promises. There is so much wonderful teaching from the Word of God in connection with the Holy Days and the numerous passages referring or alluding to them. The Holy Day seasons, therefore, serve as numerous high points throughout the year that bind our fellowship together in love and devotion to our Almighty Father in Heaven and our Beloved Saviour.

There is no legalism involved, no condemnation of others, but simply faith in God's loving providence and promises.

It is a joy to celebrate these days and connect with the same Feasts and appointed days that God commanded for His people, which Jesus Christ and the early church commemorated, calling them their "feasts of love". Through them, we continue to seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness.

For His alone is the Kingdom, The Power and The Glory, forever and ever. *Amen!*

## What About You?

It's one thing to read theoretically or philosophically about the Bible and debate these matters, but what about you? Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour? Do you wish to follow Him more closely? Do you see that in these Festivals God has made clear that to enjoy the glorious future He has promised, there is a sequence for you and I to follow?

- Have living faith in the Passover sacrifice of Jesus Christ
- Repent from your sin and life apart from God and Jesus Christ
- Be baptised into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- Live the life of Christ's faith and works - take in His body and blood daily and obey His commands
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit and be part of the mission of His Church
- Eagerly prepare, wait for and celebrate in advance His Return, in a greater way even than His First Coming - with a trumpet blast so loud the world will hear it from one end to another
- Be a part of the resurrection to a new spirit-body and life promised at His return
- Watch and be a partner with God as He reconciles the whole world to Himself
- Live and reign with Christ in His New Kingdom as one of His own priests and kings

- Be a living part of the Final Judgment and a New Heavens and a New Earth as the Throne of Heaven makes its place on earth and extends out through the Universe.

It's not a fairy-tale. Several elements have already been fulfilled. There's more to come. We will all be made to choose a side. Which side will you be on?

# We Want To Invite You

LOOKING FOR A CHURCH that teaches the Word of God faithfully and honestly? Perhaps you are also looking for a church that celebrates these Festivals as Christian events? Please join us at *Living Waters Church of God*. If you are not able to attend physically, but we can provide you support, then please get in touch as we can arrange livestreaming of our services for your edification.

We teach plainly from the Word of God and endeavour to be faithful to the whole of Scripture, preaching Salvation not from works, but through faith in Christ alone. We take very seriously Christ's command to shepherd His flock and protect it from straying towards legalism or towards liberalism, but walking the narrow path of liberty and obedience laid down by Jesus Christ.

At [www.livingwaterschurch.online](http://www.livingwaterschurch.online) you will find more about our church. You will also find growing resources, including blog posts, articles, archived sermons and links to various social media.

Additionally, our congregation hosts a multi-denominational Feast of Tabernacles in Western Australia every year. You can find details at our dedicated website [www.feastwa.org.au](http://www.feastwa.org.au). We would love for you to register and join us, wherever you come from in the world. Members attend from various churches. You choose whether you wish to attend on any given day or for the entire Feast.

There is no pressure from the pulpit during our celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles to join a particular church. We try to ensure that everyone feels they can freely attend and then return to their own local church after the Feast.

## Further Questions?

If, having read this booklet, you want to inquire with us about Jesus Christ and the Way of Salvation - whether that be taking your first steps of faith in Him or deepening your faith - please get in touch via our websites at any time.

If you are already a Christian who is interested in the Biblical Festivals and have questions, please also feel free to contact us.

For anyone local to Perth, we extend to you an open invitation to attend our services. Let us know you're coming!

Contact us via [www.livingwaterschurch.online](http://www.livingwaterschurch.online)

# CALENDARS

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