

Having set forth the requirements for maintaining the holiness of the priests  
and of the sacrifices in chapters 21-22,  
Moses now turns to the feasts of Yahweh.

The liturgical calendar of Israel was to structure life before the LORD.  
Like the rest of life in the ancient world,  
the agricultural cycle of planting and harvesting sets the tone for worship as well.  
The various feasts of Israel were timed to coordinate with the harvest,  
in order that they might bring their firstfruits and their tithes to the LORD.

Here we have a chronological description of the Lord’s appointed feasts,  
which were to be sacred assemblies—or holy convocations.  
Numbers 28:11-15 adds the “new moon” in the section describing the sacrificial calendar,  
but since it was not a feast, it is not included here or in Deuteronomy 16.  
The New Moon festival would become important in later Jewish worship  
(Cf. Amos 8:5, Is. 1:13-14, 2 Kings 4:22-23).

It is worth noting that two of the three feasts have clear New Testament parallels.  
Passover and Easter are clearly connected in the gospels.  
And Pentecost and Pentecost are clearly connected in Acts.  
The Feast of Booths/Tabernacles is the one that is less obvious.

We’ll come back to that at the end!

### **Introduction: Sabbath and Feast (v1-3)**

*The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.*

In verse 3 God starts by reminding us of the Sabbath:

<sup>3</sup> *“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.*

Verse 38 will make it clear that the Sabbath is not itself one of the feasts,  
but it is a day of holy assembly.

The name “sabbath” is not unique to Israel.

The Babylonian shabattu was the fifteenth day of the month,  
but was not a day of rest.

But God transforms the idea of Sabbath in his covenant.

At creation, God rested on the seventh day – and he calls it “shabbat.”

In the fourth commandment, Israel's seventh day  
partakes of the divine seventh-day rest,  
thus becoming an eschatological sign  
that Israel was called to enter God's rest.

This seven day rhythm of work and rest is unique in the ancient world.  
The month – the year – the day – are all based on the rhythms of nature.  
Only the week has no natural analog.  
The reason for having a seven-day rhythm is God's own example.

God created us to work for six days and to rest on the seventh.  
The sabbath is not a burden, but a blessing!  
It is a gift to those who are overworked and overstressed!

The nature of the Sabbath assembly is not clear from the Pentateuch.  
The language of "holy convocation" suggests that some sort of meeting was held,  
but the only statement of what was done on the Sabbath  
comes in Numbers 28, which simply gives the prescribed Sabbath offerings.

Verse four, however, starts the description of the appointed feasts.

### **1. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (v4-8)**

*<sup>4</sup> "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. <sup>5</sup> In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight,<sup>[a]</sup> is the LORD's Passover. <sup>6</sup> And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. <sup>7</sup> On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. <sup>8</sup> But you shall present a food offering to the LORD for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work."*

The Passover is the first of feasts (4-8)

Notice first how the Passover is transformed from a domestic meal in Exodus 12  
to a sacred feast in Exodus 13 and Leviticus 23.

In Exodus 12, the Passover lamb is slaughtered simply as a meal.

In Numbers 28 and Deuteronomy 16, we see it clearly as a sacrificial meal.

Eventually the priests will take over the job of slaughtering the lambs.

The Passover is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread,  
seven days where Israel would eat bread made without yeast.

Notice also that holy convocations are to be held on the first day and the seventh day  
of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And when you hold a holy convocation you are not to do any ordinary work.

In other words, feast days are days that should be set apart for worship –  
and otherwise treated like a Sabbath – where we rest from our ordinary labors.

## 2. Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks [Pentecost] (v9-22)

<sup>9</sup> And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest, <sup>11</sup> and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. <sup>12</sup> And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the LORD. <sup>13</sup> And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah<sup>[b]</sup> of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>14</sup> And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

The Second feast has to do with the harvest (9-22).

This has two parts, but the absence of another “And the LORD spoke to Moses” suggests that this was seen as one feast in two parts.

The Israelites were to bring the first part of the harvest to Yahweh, which they could do at the feast of Unleavened Bread.

The “sabbath” spoken of here would be the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

<sup>15</sup> “You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. <sup>16</sup> You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. <sup>17</sup> You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the LORD. <sup>18</sup> And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. <sup>19</sup> And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. <sup>20</sup> And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. <sup>21</sup> And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

From the presentation of the firstfruits they were to count 50 days, and on the day after the seventh Sabbath, they were to celebrate the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost.

So Pentecost – in the OT calendar – is always on a Sunday!

The 50<sup>th</sup> day is 7x7 + 1 – the ultimate 8<sup>th</sup> day.

Pentecost is the fulfillment of Passover.

Remember that the Passover (or rather, Unleavened Bread) is a seven-day feast.

Passover ends with Israel still in bondage.  
It is the feast that points to the future deliverance of Israel.

But the firstfruits of the harvest are to be brought during Passover

And those firstfruits point forward to the coming of Pentecost.  
Passover, in other words, is incomplete without Pentecost!

(The resurrection of Christ is incomplete without the giving of the Holy Spirit!)

Now, if you do the math carefully,  
you will find that Exodus 19:1 says that the giving of the Law at Sinai  
came in the third month.

If Passover starts at the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> month –  
and then you count 50 days –  
that puts you at the beginning of the third month!

And so Jewish tradition has always related Pentecost to the giving of the Law.  
After the destruction of the Temple, and the harvest character was lost,  
it became exclusively devoted to the law.

Think about what happened at Mt. Sinai when God gave the Law to Israel!

The glory of the LORD appeared on the mountain –  
the presence of God with his people!

And when the one greater than Moses ascended the hill of the LORD  
and entered the heavenly holy of holies –  
he poured out his Holy Spirit – and fire came upon the earth –  
that resulted in the proclamation of the word of the LORD  
(as we heard in Acts 2 this morning!)

Verse 22 may seem odd in this context:

*<sup>22</sup> “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.”*

Remember that v21 has just said that Pentecost is also a feast day – do no ordinary work!  
Chapter 19 had already told us not to reap our fields to the edge – nor gather gleanings.  
But now the LORD repeats this in the context of worship.  
If you would be holy as your God is holy,  
then make sure that the poor and the sojourner have something – not just to eat –

but also so that they can *feast* with you!

This sets us up for the feasts of the seventh month –  
because the feast of booths is the feast where you would bring the tithe.  
What can the poor and the sojourner bring?  
Well, if you have left sufficient resources in your fields –  
then they will not have to come empty handed!

Notice again that there are two principles at work here:

- 1) Don't be selfish. It may be *your field* and *your harvest* -  
but if Yahweh is *your God*  
then you will care for the poor the way he cares for you!
- 2) The poor are expected to come and glean –  
food is available for those who will come and get it.

(There is another category of those who are unable to work – like Naomi –  
and they are to be cared for by those around them – like Ruth)

### **3. The Feasts of the Seventh Month (v23-44)**

#### **a. The Feast of Trumpets Announces the Seventh Month (v23-25)**

<sup>23</sup> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* <sup>24</sup> *“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. <sup>25</sup> You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD.”*

The last three feasts all were to take place in the seventh month.

The Feast of Trumpets was the first day of the seventh month (23-25).  
This was the shophar, the ram's horn.

Trumpets were not really musical instruments in those days.  
They were for signaling –  
warning people of an approaching enemy,  
or summoning people to a solemn assembly.

On the first day of the seventh month,  
the blowing of trumpets signaled the coming judgment of God.

Why do I say that?

Because of what comes next!

On the first day of the month the blowing of trumpets announces the coming Day of Atonement!

#### **b. The Day of Atonement: the Annual Fast Day (v26-32)**

<sup>26</sup> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* <sup>27</sup> *“Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the*

*Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves<sup>[d]</sup> and present a food offering to the LORD. <sup>28</sup> And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. <sup>29</sup> For whoever is not afflicted<sup>[e]</sup> on that very day shall be cut off from his people. <sup>30</sup> And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. <sup>31</sup> You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. <sup>32</sup> It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.”*

The Day of Atonement was the tenth day of the seventh month (26-32)  
Here, as in Lev. 25:9, the word atonement is plural (kippurim),  
suggesting complete atonement.  
This is the only prescribed fast day in the OT,  
and here it is explicitly stated that their sabbath rest  
is to be from evening to evening.

You start the fast at evening on the 9<sup>th</sup> day –  
and you fast until the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> day.  
By the way, this shows that the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> day is still considered the 9<sup>th</sup> day!  
Sometimes you hear people say that in the OT the day started at sundown.  
If that was the case, then Moses would have said the evening of the 10<sup>th</sup> day!  
But the twilight period after the sun goes down is still part of the 9<sup>th</sup> day.

The reason why Moses is so explicit here is because people need to know –  
when do I start my fast, and when do I end my fast?  
You start at sundown on the 9<sup>th</sup> day –  
and you end at sundown on the 10<sup>th</sup> day.

By the way, that is why we will have communion together on the evening of our fast day –  
Thursday, February 23.

I would encourage you to eat an early dinner on Wednesday the 22<sup>nd</sup> –  
and then we will fast all day on the 23<sup>rd</sup> –  
and break our fast together with the Lord’s Supper Thursday night.

Fasting – properly speaking – refers to abstaining from food entirely.  
We realize that some people – for health reasons –  
cannot abstain from food entirely.  
In such cases, a partial fast is appropriate.  
The point of fasting – as the word God uses here suggests –  
is to afflict yourself.

Abstaining entirely from food for a day is hard!  
You get hungry!

If you're not careful you can get hangry!

Fasting does not generally make you feel particularly holy.  
It can make you feel irritable and easily annoyed.

But that's part of the point!

It's easy to think of ourselves as competent and self-controlled  
when we are full and at ease!

But when we are hungry, we are reminded of our dependence on God.

So if you cannot abstain entirely from food,  
make sure that you afflict yourself in some way  
that creates a similar sort of discomfort!

If you need help to figure that out, feel free to ask –  
talk to someone who has experience in fasting.

Jesus expects us to fast – in the same way that he expects us to pray!

He said, *when* you fast, do not fast like the hypocrites.

He didn't say "if" you fast – but *when*.

And we see the apostles practice this in the book of Acts.

For instance, in Acts 14:23 elders were ordained with prayer and fasting.

But it's also important to note that the fast of the 7<sup>th</sup> month in Israel's calendar  
was just 5 days away from the Great Feast of Booths.

Fasting for the Day of Atonement was to lead directly to the great celebration  
of God's provision for his people!

After the fast on the 10<sup>th</sup> day, you pretty much just have time to pack up your tithe  
and head to Jerusalem to get to the temple in time for the Feast of Booths.

### **c. The Feast of Booths: Joy in God's Provision (v33-43)**

<sup>33</sup> *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,* <sup>34</sup> *"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths<sup>[f]</sup> to the LORD.* <sup>35</sup> *On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work.* <sup>36</sup> *For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.*

The Feast of Booths was from the fifteenth to the twenty-third (33-43).

Exodus 23:16 and 34:22 refer to this as the Feast of Ingathering,  
and give no date for it,

but Leviticus, Numbers 29:12-34 and Dt. 16:13-15 give more detail.

It is to conclude with a festive assembly on the eighth day.

(See also Ezekiel 45:25 and Neh. 8:18, and 1 Kings 8:65)  
It is often called simply “the feast”  
(1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32; 2 Chron. 7:8-9; Neh 8:14; John 7:37)

Once again – as a feast day, it is a day when you shall not do any ordinary work.

<sup>37</sup> “*These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day,* <sup>38</sup> *besides the LORD's Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.*”

Verses 37-38 make it clear that these various feasts in no way alter Israel’s Sabbath obligations. The weekly Sabbath continues week by week –  
and there are times throughout the year when you would bring vow offerings, gifts and freewill offerings.

Leviticus doesn’t bring up the question of the tithe here (that will come later) –  
but it is worth noting that the OT required a variety of economic obligations:  
the tithe (10% of your increase) at the feast of booths;  
the firstfruits (at unleavened bread);  
gleanings (left for the poor);  
various vow offerings, gifts, and freewill offerings (mentioned here).

It’s safe to say that the average Israelite landowner  
would devote something over 15% of his income to various religious purposes.

But that doesn’t translate neatly into the modern economy.  
After all, the average Israelite *laborer* had very few economic obligations.  
The tithe was based on production –  
so no one “tithed” money.  
The tithe is agriculturally based.

This is why I don’t say that tithing is required in the NT.  
Rather, the NT takes all the principles of the OT  
and urges us to think about how to apply them!

The firstfruits principle says that we should give the *first* part to God  
(not just the leftovers).

The tithing principle says that 10% is certainly a fitting standard  
(Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoil  
before there was a law of Moses!)

Gleanings are a reminder that a portion of our harvest *belongs* to the poor.

And freewill offerings and vow offerings and gifts

remind us that we shouldn’t just be thinking about what we *need* to give –



but that the LORD loves a cheerful giver!

<sup>39</sup> “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. <sup>40</sup> And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. <sup>41</sup> You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. <sup>42</sup> You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, <sup>43</sup> that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

Verses 39-43 then urge Israel to live in booths during the Feast of Booths.

They are to remember to that all Israel dwelt in booths during the wilderness wanderings.

Remember that God provided for you in the wilderness.

### **Conclusion: The Feasts of the LORD (v44)**

<sup>44</sup> Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD.

I said at the beginning of the sermon that Passover and Pentecost

have clear connections to Easter and Pentecost in the Christian year.

What do we do with Booths?

The prophet Zechariah speaks of the fulfillment of the Feast of Booths (14:16-19)

<sup>16</sup> Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. <sup>17</sup> And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. <sup>18</sup> And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; <sup>[h]</sup> there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. <sup>19</sup> This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

This sounds pretty serious!

If we don't celebrate the feast of booths, then the plagues of Egypt will come upon us!

So how do we celebrate the Feast of Booths?

First, remember the connection between the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths?

The Day of Atonement is the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month –  
and the Feast of Booths is the 15<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> day.

The Day of Atonement is the day when the High Priest enters the holy of holies

with the blood of the sin offering,  
in order to make atonement for the sins of the people

Without the Day of Atonement, there is no Feast of Booths.

The book of Hebrews makes it abundantly clear that the Day of Atonement happened once for all  
in the ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father.

If there is a once-for-all Day of Atonement in Christ,  
then there must be a once-for-all Feast of Booths in Christ.

And in fact the book of Revelation portrays the Bride as a truly glorious Booth!!  
And the Wedding Supper of the Lamb is that Feast!

After all, there is no need for Passover at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb!  
Passover has been accomplished.

And what need is there for Pentecost at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb?

The Law has accomplished its purpose –  
and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit has brought the bride to this day!

What is left – but Booths? Tabernacles!

*“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” (Rev. 21:3-4)*

Indeed, our Lord Jesus points us this direction in John 7 –  
where John tells us that it was at the feast of booths when Jesus went to Jerusalem, and:

*<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as <sup>17</sup> the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

When Jesus is glorified, the *point* of the Feast of Booths has been fulfilled *in him*.

He *is* the river of living water.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10 – Israel drank of the spiritual rock that followed them,  
and that rock was Christ!

And so in one sense, the Feast of Booths awaits us in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

But in another sense, the Feast of Booths awaits us every Lord’s Day –  
because Christ, your heavenly bridegroom offers you *himself*.