

The Feasts of the Lord

(Leviticus 23; Exodus 12:1-28; Esther 9:20-28)

by

Joelee Chamberlain

Holidays are fun, aren't they? I think we all like to celebrate holidays. I know my family does! Well, the Jews have some special holidays that are very interesting. Yes, I know I've talked to you about them before! But this time I'm going to tell you even more things about them -- and I'm also going to tell you about two more of their holidays that I didn't even talk about before! All right? That should be not only very interesting but fun as well! And we can learn things from them, too!

Okay, then. You remember, don't you, that after the Lord had taken the Jews out of Egypt, that the Lord had talked to Moses, giving Moses rules and laws for the Jews. We often call that the Law of Moses. Well, part of the Law of Moses was about 7 special times that the Jews would have. (The Jews were also called Hebrews or the children of Israel.) And the Lord told them that these holidays were to be celebrated every year. But there are also 2 things that happened in Jewish history that later the Jews themselves made into 2 extra holidays. Sometimes all 9 of these special times are called the Feasts of the Lord.

Now-a-days Jews still have all of these celebrations. So let's talk about them. First we'll talk about the 7 holidays that the Lord Himself gave to Israel. Later we'll talk about the 2 added holidays. You're going to enjoy this!

Okay, then. In the Old Testament part of the Bible it tells us that a long, long time ago, about 1,500 years before Jesus came to earth, the Lord God gave His 7 special days to the children of Israel. Some of these special days were for the Jews to remember things that had happened to them and how then the Lord had protected them. Others special days were for them to remember other things like when their crops were all grown and harvested and they had lots of food, remembering God's care of them and that He had made their food grow. Sort of like our Thanksgiving time here in the United States.

These were special times of happiness and worship -- and feasting on lots of good food! Yummy! These special days were scattered throughout the year, and at those times the Jewish people would gather together and have a wonderful time. Wouldn't that be fun?!

And the Lord carefully told them just when these celebrations were to be held each year. Which month and even which day of the month. God even told them where they were to celebrate these holidays.

You see, the Lord God told the children of Israel that they were to celebrate these holidays wherever the Tabernacle or later the temple was. The Tabernacle was the special beautiful tent that was to be the center of their worship for several hundred years until the temple was built in Jerusalem in the promised land of Canaan. (Canaan was later called the land of Israel.) Then after the temple was built in Jerusalem, the Jews would gather from all over the country there at the temple for these

holidays. Yes, these were very happy time of visiting each other and feasting and worshipping the Lord. These were holy days, days separate to the Lord.

But what were these celebrations? Okay, I'll tell you about them now.

Well, the first big celebration God gave to the children of Israel was Passover. It was to be in the Spring time. They were to start their year then, and Passover was to be on the 14th day of that first month. (The Jews have a somewhat different calendar than ours.) And Passover was for them to remember something that had happened to them and to celebrate how the Lord had taken care of them then.

But what was it that had happened to them, and how had the Lord taken care of them at that time? We find this true story of how Passover started in the book of Exodus, the second book in the Bible.

Okay. About Passover. You remember, don't you, that the Jews, the children of Israel, had been slaves in Egypt. And then the Lord had sent Moses and Aaron to take them out of Egypt to the promised land of Canaan, hadn't He? But Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, didn't want to let them go, so the Lord had sent 10 plagues onto Egypt, 10 bad things that would happen to them. Now, the Egyptians didn't worship the Lord God. No. Instead, they worshipped idols and even animals! Imagine that!! How foolish!! Also, how wicked! Only the Lord God is to be worshipped, right?! Anyway, these plagues would show Pharaoh and the Egyptians that the Lord is really God, the only God, and that they should obey Him.

The very last of these plagues was that the firstborn in each house would die on a certain night unless a lamb was killed and its blood was put around the doorway and the people went inside the house and stayed there. If the blood was there, then the angel of the Lord would just pass over that house and the firstborn in that house would not die.

So the Jews and any of the Egyptians who had believed the Lord did what the Lord had said. On that certain evening they put the lamb's blood around the doorway and went inside and stayed there. And they had been told that as they ate their dinner, they were to be all dressed and ready to leave Egypt as soon as they would be told to go. And that night the angel of the Lord passed over those homes.

But the people who had not believed what the Lord had said and so had not put the blood on their doorways, then their firstborn died that night. That's very sad, but it was their own fault, wasn't it? After all, they had not paid any attention to the Lord's warning, so they had not done what they had been told to do by God. And that included Pharaoh's household.

So in the middle of that night there was lots of crying. And Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and told them, "Take the children of Israel and everything you have, and get out of Egypt!" And the Egyptians told them, "Hurry!"

And they did. The children of Israel were already all dressed to go, weren't they? So they just

grabbed their stuff and left and headed out toward the wilderness with Moses. They hadn't even had time to let their bread rise for baking the next day; they just took the bread dough without its rising. So for the next few days their bread was just flat bread. And the Lord led them with a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night.

Well, God wanted the children of Israel to remember how good He had been to them and how their homes had been passed over, that their firstborn hadn't died, and also that He had delivered them from being slaves in Egypt. So God told Moses to have the children of Israel have a special celebration each year in the Spring time and to start their year then. And this celebration was to be at that very same time of the year that God had delivered them from their slavery in Egypt. The celebration would start on the 14th day of the first month of their year, the day that the lamb's blood had been put around the doorpost to save their firstborn back in Egypt. And they would call this holiday time Passover, remembering that the angel of the Lord had passed over them.

And then starting the next day after Passover during that whole next week they would celebrate what is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That is, though they would have other good food, the only bread they were to eat would be a flat bread, an unleavened bread, bread that didn't rise. This was to remember how quickly God had delivered them -- so quickly that their bread hadn't even had time to rise.

So those are the first two of God's great holidays for Israel, Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, one right after the other. They go together, don't they? So after that each year during that time the people would all get together with their family and friends and there would be 8 days of feasting and good times! Wouldn't that be a lot of fun?! And, of course, since they were remembering what the Lord had done for them, it was also a time of worship. It's so good to think about God and to thank Him for taking such good care of us, isn't it? And when we do that, that's a way of worshipping the Lord.

The next special day that the Lord told the children of Israel to have was a special harvest celebration. (To harvest means that when the grain or food is all grown and ripe, you cut it down and gather it in; you harvest the food.) This special time was to be on the day after the Sabbath, on what we would call Sunday, and it was to celebrate the very first harvest of grain of the year, the harvest of barley in the Spring time. They would remember that the Lord had made their barley to grow for them. Now, the barley would be ready to harvest just about Passover time, so later it was fixed that this special day was to be celebrated on the first Sunday after the day of Passover itself.

You see, different grains grow at different times of the year. And after the Jews reached the promised land of Canaan, they planted crops. In the winter time they would plant barley seeds and wheat seeds which would then start growing. But the barley would grow more quickly than the wheat. Then in the early Spring when the barley was ripe, they would harvest that barley, and the people would remember that the Lord had made their very first grain crop of the year, this barley, to grow. This feast time was called the Feast of Firstfruits, the first grain of the year to be harvested.

So far, then, that makes 3 special times that the Lord gave to the children of Israel, doesn't it? Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits. And these were all in the same

week, weren't they? But even though there were 3 special times in that week, each one was to remember a different thing, wasn't it? First, Passover was to remember when the angel of the Lord had passed over their homes, and their firstborn hadn't died. Second, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to remember that the Lord had delivered them from their slavery and had done it so quickly that their bread hadn't even had time to rise. And third, the Feast of Firstfruits was to remember that the Lord had made their first crop of the year to grow. Three special times in just one week.

Then 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits, the wheat would be ripe. So then they would harvest their summer wheat. And they would have yet another harvest celebration, the 4th special time the Lord gave the Jews. It would be a time to thank the Lord for having their summer wheat to grow.

Now, a week has 7 days, doesn't it? So 50 days would be 7 weeks plus one day, wouldn't it? So this special holiday was called the Feast of Weeks, because it was 7 weeks after the Passover time. Later it was called Pentecost. Pentecost comes from the Greek word for 50, as it was 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits which was during Passover time. Now-a-days the Jews call it "Shavuot", which means "weeks" in the Hebrew language.

So that's the first four of these special celebration times, these holidays that the Lord gave to His people, and they were all in the Spring time each year, weren't they? Passover Day, the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits were all 3 within just one week. And then 7 weeks later, there was the Feast of Weeks. And at those two times the Jews would go to the temple in Jerusalem and worship the Lord there while having a good time eating lots of food and visiting with friends. Doesn't that sound like fun?!

But then came the summer time, and there were several months when God gave no special feast times at all. Now, why do you think they wouldn't have special holidays where they'd go to Jerusalem and have feasts and good times during the Summer? Think about it a minute. Well, remember, they were just about all of them farmers then, and they had to raise their own food. So all summer the men would all be busy working in the fields taking care of their crops, wouldn't they? They couldn't just leave their fields and vineyards and gardens and go up to Jerusalem and have celebrations, could they? No, they had to work.

But finally after about 4 months the Summer was over. Then in the Autumn, in the 7th month of the Jewish calendar, the food had all grown, and it was time to harvest the last crops of the year. And then the Lord gave them 3 more special times all in the same month. And they would all go to Jerusalem again to worship the Lord. On the first day of that 7th month, there would be a day called the Feast of Trumpets. (The Jews now call this Rosh Hashannah, which are words in the Hebrew language.) Trumpets would be blown, and after all of their hard time of working in their fields and then harvesting, the people would all rest that day.

Then a few days later on the 10th day of this same 7th month would be a very solemn day called the Day of Atonement. (The Jews now call this Yom Kippur which means "Day of Atonement" in the Hebrew language.) This was not a day of feasting and celebrating; it was a day to remember their sins. And there were special sacrifices for their sins, and the people were to be sorry

for their sins and not to work on that day. This is the only special day that the Lord told His people to be sorrowful, not to have a happy time. The other special days were all times of happy celebrating and feasting. But on the Day of Atonement they were to remember that they were all sinners, and they were to be sorry for their sins and to ask the Lord to forgive them.

But then 5 days after the Day of Atonement, starting on the 15th day of this same 7th month, would come the last special time that the Lord gave to the children of Israel. It was to be a whole week of good times! It would be at the time in the Fall when the winter wheat and the grapes and all their other crops had been harvested. It would be sort of like our Thanksgiving Day, except that the Jews would celebrate and feast for 7 days! This time was called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. ("Tabernacles" means shelters or booths or tents.) (The Jews now call this "Succoth", which means "booths" in the Hebrew language.)

Now why was this special time called the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths? Well, not only were the Jews to be thanking the Lord for all of their food that had grown over the summer, but they were also to remember something. They were to remember the time after the Lord had taken them out of Egypt where they had been slaves. They were to remember that while they were traveling in the wilderness for 40 years, that they had lived in tents or booths and that the Lord had led them and had taken very good care of them. Why, during that whole time the Lord had given them special food to eat called manna, and He had given them and their flocks of animals water out in that wilderness-desert. And even their clothes and shoes hadn't worn out! And during that time in the wilderness they had camped out in tents or built booths, shelters, with branches. So to remember that time when the Lord had taken such good care of them in the wilderness and that they had then lived in booths or tents, now for a whole week near the end of every year the Lord told the children of Israel to get together and have a big campout in Jerusalem!! Wouldn't that be fun?!

Yes, the Jews were to get together in Jerusalem with their families and friends and build booths to sleep in and have feasting and good times for a whole week! And they would remember that many years before, their ancestors had lived in tents and booths as they had traveled in the wilderness and that the Lord had taken such good care of them. And they would also remember how that now the Lord had made their crops grow well that year. It was like a week long Thanksgiving time with a campout! What fun!! But they would also remember that after the 40 years in the wilderness, their ancestors had then gone on to the Promised Land of Canaan and then lived there in regular houses. After all, they didn't stay in the wilderness and live in booths or tents forever, did they?

So just as there had been 3 special times in the same month in the Spring time, in the first month of their year (Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits), now again in the Fall there were to be 3 special times that were all in the same month in their 7th month (the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.). These were both times when they would all gather at the temple in Jerusalem. Also they would go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks in the late Spring.

These special, holy days that the Lord gave to Israel would be wonderful times. On each of them there would be special ceremonies at the temple. Yes, three times a year the people would all get

together from all over the country and go to Jerusalem and worship the Lord and visit each other and have feasts. In the early Spring, in the late Spring, and in the Fall.

So before we go on, let's quickly list these three times, these holidays when they'd go with their families to feast and to worship the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem. First they would go in the Spring at the beginning of their year to Jerusalem for a week for Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits, wouldn't they? Next, they'd go to Jerusalem again about 2 months later at the Feast of Weeks. And then several months later in the Fall, near the end of their year, they'd go yet again to Jerusalem for the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the whole week of the Feast of Tabernacles. Wouldn't those have been great times! Imagine three times each year being able to play for a whole week with friends who lived far away from you! And to eat all of that good food, too!

And all of these were special fun times that the Lord wanted His special people the Jews to have in order to remember how much God loves them and how God had taken care of them and to remember that He is the One who makes their food to grow.

Now I want to explain something before I go on. I spoke of God's special people the Jews. But everyone is special to the Lord God, aren't they? And all people who believe in Jesus and have trusted Him to forgive their sins are even more special to God. But the Bible tells us that God chose the Jews to be His special nation, His special people that way. In fact, God had Jews write the Bible, and we learn about God from the Bible, don't we? But let's go on now about the special times the Lord gave to the children of Israel.

These were times of great happiness and worship. And the Lord told His special people, the Jews, to have these wonderful celebrations every year throughout history. And do you want to know something? They still have them! Yes, now, thousands of years after the Lord gave these special days, many of the Jews still have special holidays on Passover and eat unleavened bread then (and lots of other good food as well!). And later they celebrate the Feast of Weeks. And in the Fall they have special services on the Feast of Trumpets. Then on the Day of Atonement, many of them fast, don't eat. And during the Feast of Tabernacles some of them still build little booths and sometimes even sleep in them.

But now the Jews don't go to Jerusalem for these holidays. Why not? Because there isn't a temple in Jerusalem anymore. No, it was destroyed hundreds of years ago. And since there is no longer a temple in Jerusalem, instead they now celebrate these special times in their synagogues (like churches) and in their homes. And also, remember, the sacrifices were to be offered at the temple in Jerusalem, weren't they? So now since there is no longer a temple in Jerusalem, they don't have sacrifices anymore. But all over the world Jews still have these celebrations, though without sacrifices. And at those times they read in the Bible how the Lord had taken care of their ancestors thousands of years ago when He had taken them out of Egypt and cared for them in the wilderness.

Now, earlier I said that there are two other times of celebration that the Jews have, too, didn't I? But these were not holidays that the Lord God gave them in the Law of Moses. No. But they are holidays where the Jews remember how the Lord had protected them hundreds of years after they had

left Egypt. These two holidays both come later in the year, in the winter time, after the holidays that the Lord gave them. And in the New Testament it tells us that when Jesus was here on earth that He went to Jerusalem during these holidays. And now-a-days many of the Jews still celebrate these extra two holidays. So why don't I tell you about them, also?

The first of these two extra holidays is what is called Hanukkah now. But in the New Testament part of the Bible the apostle John calls Hanukkah the Feast of Dedication, and John tells us that Jesus went to the temple during that time, ("Hanukkah" means "dedication" in the Hebrew language.)

The story of why they have Hanukkah is not told in the Bible. You see, something had happened about 200 years before Jesus came to earth, before the New Testament time. So the Jews wrote about it after it happened and made a holiday to remember what had happened. And we can still read about it now, though not in the Bible.

What had happened? Well, the Romans had conquered the land of Israel, and a very bad man had done bad things in the Lord's temple in Jerusalem, things that were against the laws that the Lord had given. But that was the Lord's temple! So some Jews got together and were able to fight and to take the temple back from the Romans. But because of what this bad man had done, the Jews felt that this made the temple sort of not clean, not fit for the worship of the Lord God. So then the Jews got busy and cleaned up the temple of God. When they got it all cleaned up, they had a big celebration. In this celebration, they dedicated the temple; that is, they told the people that the temple was all clean now and ready again to use for sacrifices for the Lord.

And this is where the Feast of Dedication, Hanukkah, came from. The Jews now celebrate Hanukkah for a whole week! They have lots of good food and give gifts during this time. And the families light special candles then. Sometimes Hanukkah is called the Feast of Lights. Hanukkah is in the winter time, near our Christmas time.

The second and last of the extra holidays takes place at the end of Winter, at the very end of the Jewish year. It is called the Feast of Lots or Purim ("Purim" means "lots" in the Hebrew language). And this is to remember something very important that happened about 500 years before Jesus came to earth.

And what was that? Well, this important thing is told about in the Bible in the book of Esther. You remember the true story of the beautiful Queen Esther, don't you? It is when a very bad man named Haman wanted to kill all of the Jews. And in order to decided which day to do this, he had cast lots. (I think that was sort of like throwing dice.) That is why Purim is called the Feast of Lots. But with the advice of Mordecai, Esther's wise cousin, Esther was able to stop Haman, and the Jews weren't killed. So then the Jews were able to have rest from their enemies. Do you remember that true story?

So at Purim, even now many of the Jews get together and read the book of Esther from the Bible. They will shout "Boo!!" when Haman's name is read, but they will clap their hands and cheer when Mordecai's name is read! Often the children will dress up in costumes, and there are special

foods, too. Doesn't that sound like a lot of fun?!

And that is the end of the 9 special holidays that the Jews have. 7 of them the Lord gave them (the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits; then the Feast of Weeks; and then the Feast Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles), And last there are the 2 holidays that they get from their history (Hanukkah and Purim). But --

We find out that these feasts were more than just fun times when they would gather together, have good food, worship the Lord, and remember things that had happened a long time ago. In fact, there is something about these feasts of Israel for those of us who are living now and for those of us who are not Jews as well! Did you know that?!

Yes, if we look at these 9 special holy days carefully and think about them, we can see from the Bible that these special celebrations were also picture-prophecies! Yes! Not only were these holidays a time to remember things that had happened a long time ago, but they were also like little stories and ceremonies to show some very important things that were going to happen someday!

Now, why do I say that? Because we can see that in the Bible. Yes, the Bible tells about some of these picture-prophecies that have already been fulfilled; and then we can study to try to figure out about others that will be fulfilled someday later, ones that haven't been fulfilled yet. These holiday times are sort of like being able to see a little into the future! Wow! That's exciting, isn't it?! Seeing into the future!! So let's just think about that for a few minutes.

Let's start with Passover. As I said earlier, in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament it tells us that at that first Passover in Egypt, lambs had died to save the lives of the firstborn and to save them from slavery in Egypt. And then each year after that lambs would be offered at Passover to remember those lambs that had died for them in Egypt. But then hundreds of years after that, remember that in the New Testament John the Baptist calls Jesus the Lamb of God. Of course, Jesus wasn't actually a little sheep, was He? No, of course not! Jesus was both a man and God at the same time. But since Jesus was going to die as a sacrifice for our sins, He was compared to a lamb.

So, about 1,500 years after that first Passover in Egypt, Jesus, the Lamb of God, died on the cross, his blood being spilled to save us from our sins -- and this happened on an actual Passover Day! In fact, the apostle Paul actually calls Jesus our Passover, the special Lamb of God that saves us from our sins. And the details given to the Jews about how to deal with the Passover lambs matched things that had to do with Jesus. So Passover really is a picture of Jesus and when He would die for our sins, isn't it? And the lambs were a picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God. our Passover Lamb, weren't they? Yes, Passover was a prophecy about Jesus; the Bible is very clear on that. Those in Egypt who believed the Lord and killed the lamb were saved from death by the blood of that lamb. And now those who believe in Jesus are saved from their sins by the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, when His blood was spilled for us.

Next, what about the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the days following the actual Passover day? Well, this is a little harder for us to understand what it is a picture of. But first, just what is leaven? Well, leaven is the yeast that makes bread and dinner rolls rise and be all light and fluffy. Have you

ever watched anyone make this kind of bread? They take just a little yeast and dissolve it in warm water and then add lots of flour and any other ingredients, and then they mix this all up together well to make the bread dough. After that they cover the bread dough and leave it in a warm place for an hour or so or even sometimes overnight. And what happens during that time? Well, the yeast is a tiny plant, and it starts growing inside of the bread dough. And as it grows, the yeast (the leaven) makes little bubbles of gas. And the bubbles make the bread dough start rising, start getting bigger and softer. After it is about twice as big as when it started out, eventually the bread can be formed into loaves or rolls and baked, and it will be all light and fluffy. And this softness was all caused by just a little bit of yeast at the beginning, wasn't it?

Well, the apostle Paul tells us in the Bible that sin is like leaven, like yeast. Paul says we should throw out this "leaven". But what does that mean? Well, if we keep little sins in our lives, then those sins sort of grow like the little bit of yeast grows in the bread dough. That means that then it becomes easier and easier for us to sin. In fact, the Bible says that before we are saved, before we believe in Jesus, that we are actually slaves to sin! Ugh! But after we are saved, we aren't slaves to sin anymore; we belong to God, and we should follow Him. You might say that we are saved from our slavery to sin by Jesus, our Passover Lamb. Yes, and then we should try to live for the Lord and do what He wants and ask God to help us to do this. We can become more like the unleavened bread that doesn't have any yeast. And that is what the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a picture of, of our turning from our lives of sin, to obey the Lord God instead. Jesus died on a Passover day for our sins, and we should then trust Him, turn from our sins, and follow Him. Also, Jesus did no sins at all, did He? He was sort of like bread with no leaven, unleavened bread. I know that all of this may be a little hard to understand, but if you think about it a little, I think you'll get it. (By the way, it's all right for the Jews and us to eat bread that has leaven! The Jews were just told to eat only unleavened bread during the Passover time. Other times they could eat bread with leaven.)

Okay, let's go on. What comes next after Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Yes, next comes the Feast of Firstfruits that was to be held on the first Sunday after Passover. A feast connected with the first harvest of crops. There are 2 prophecies connected with the Feast of Firstfruits. Let's look at the first of these 2 prophecies first and then the second one just a little later.

Well, as I just said, Jesus died for us on a Passover day. But what happened 3 days later on the first Sunday after Passover, on the Feast of Firstfruits? That's right. 3 days after Jesus died, He rose from the dead!! Yes, Jesus was resurrected actually on the Feast of Firstfruits, on the day we call Easter Sunday! And He's still alive in heaven, isn't He? And in the Bible the apostle Paul clearly calls Jesus the Firstfruits of the Resurrection. So the Feast of Firstfruits is a picture-prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus, isn't it? Jesus is the first one to be resurrected and stay alive after having been dead. But if there are firstfruits, does that mean there will be a sort of secondfruits, too? Yes, it does, and that is the second prophecy connected with the Feast of Firstfruits. But we'll talk about that just a little later, not now.

So let's go on now and look at the next feast that the Lord gave, the Feast of Weeks. This was held 7 weeks (50 days) after the Feast of Firstfruits. Remember, it was another feast about harvesting crops. Well, in the book of Acts in the New Testament, the Feast of Weeks is called Pentecost. And there it tells us that 7 weeks after Jesus had risen from the dead on the Feast of Firstfruits, that on the

day of Pentecost itself, something very big happened. Yes, on that Pentecost day the Holy Spirit came with great power onto Peter and James and John and the other apostles. And they all began being able to speak in other languages, languages they hadn't known before! Wow! That was a miracle, wasn't it?! And thousands of people (many from other countries) who were in Jerusalem for this feast, heard them speaking these other languages, and they gathered and listened to the apostles. And Peter got up and gave a speech about Jesus, about how Jesus had died for our sins but then had been resurrected. And many, many of the people who were listening realized that they were sinners, and they shouted out to Peter, "Oh, what should we do about this?!"

And Peter told them, "Turn to the Lord Jesus Christ." And that very day about 3,000 people believed on Jesus and were baptized! How wonderful! Yes, these people heard the Gospel and then believed it, so that was like a big harvest of souls, wasn't it?! And this happened on that special harvest feast, the Feast of Weeks, Pentecost.

So I think we can see very clearly from the Bible that those first 4 holidays that the Lord gave to His people for the beginning of their year were really picture-prophecies, can't we? They were picture-prophecies of when the Lord Jesus would come the first time and die for our sins and then be alive again 3 days later and then when Peter and the apostles would start preaching about this, and thousands would be saved by believing in Jesus.

But what about the other 3 special times that the Lord gave to the Jews for near the end of their year? Yes, what about the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement and the week-long happy Feast of Tabernacles? And what about the 2 special times (Hanukkah and Purim) that the Jews added later on from their history? Might not they also be picture-prophecies -- but of things that haven't happened yet but which will happen sometime in the future? They certainly seem that way. (When you get older, you can look into this in the Bible for yourself.) So let's talk about these last feasts now and what they might be picture-prophecies of. It will be like looking into the future! Isn't this exciting?!

Well, we don't know when it will happen, of course, but all through the Bible it tells us that the Lord Jesus will come back to earth again someday, doesn't it? And then He will set up His kingdom. And the Bible says that if we have believed in Him, trusted in the Lord Jesus to save us from our sins, then we can be with Him there and rule with Him in His kingdom. (There will be regular people there, too.) And these last 3 special times that the Lord gave to His people are like pictures, prophecies, of that wonderful time after the Lord Jesus comes back.

But first, these last feasts were later in the year, weren't they? So what about the summer months when there weren't any special holidays, the time when people are working on their crops? Mightn't that gap between the holidays be a picture-prophecy of something, too? I think it is.

You see, it has been a long time, almost 2000 years so far, since the Lord Jesus went back to heaven. And the Summer months without holidays seem to me to be like a picture of this time, the time between when Jesus came the first time and died for our sins and when He will come back again the second time and be King of the whole world. And you and I are still living in that time right now, in the gap of time between the 2 comings of the Lord Jesus, aren't we? This gap is a time when the

Gospel is going out to all the world, sort of like planting the seeds of the Gospel, planting a "crop" for the Lord. And during this time, the time when we are now living, many, many people have been hearing about Jesus and believing on Jesus to save them from their sins and then following Him, trying to do what the Lord wants. It's like a big crop is being planted and grown, getting ready to be harvested. (We'll look at this "harvest" in a minute.)

Now after this summer gap in time, what is the next feast of the Lord? Yes, the Feast of Trumpets. Well, as I just said, the Bible tells us that some day the Lord Jesus will come back to earth and be King of everything and everyone, doesn't it? And the Bible says that when Jesus comes back that the trumpet of God will be sounded. So it seems that the Feast of Trumpets is a picture/prophecy of the trumpet when Jesus comes back again someday.

Now remember I had said that Jesus was the Firstfruit of the resurrection, hadn't I? Yes, Jesus was raised from the dead on the day of the Feast of Firstfruits, wasn't He? But I had also said that there would be a sort of secondfruits of the resurrection. Well, the Bible also tells us that at the time when the Lord Jesus comes back, He will resurrect the dead Christians, make them alive again and give them what we call resurrection bodies, bodies that will never sin or get sick or die again. This is the secondfruits of the resurrection!

This will be like a big "harvest", won't it? That is, dead Christians will be resurrected and will always be alive and with the Lord in their bodies after that forever -- secondfruits! Just as Jesus became alive forever in His body on the Feast of Firstfruits!

Also, when the Lord Jesus comes back and the trumpet of God sounds, there will be Christians who are still alive. And as the dead Christians are resurrected, then these living Christians will also be part of that second "harvest". They will be given like resurrection bodies, too, and will be with the Lord forever, too. The Feast of Trumpets sounds like a picture-prophecy of this time when the Lord Jesus returns to earth and resurrection bodies are given to all Christians and they will be with the Lord forever.

But what comes next after the Feast of Trumpets in the special days for the Jews? Yes, 10 days later comes the Day of Atonement. Can this day also be a picture-prophecy? Yes, I think it can. So let's look at it. Remember, the Day of Atonement was to be a time of sacrifice and mourning for their sins and not doing any work.

Okay then. Right now, many Jews don't believe that Jesus is God; they don't believe that Jesus is the One that the Old Testament tells about who would be their Messiah (their Saviour) and save them from their sins and then later be King of the whole world. But the prophet Zechariah tells us in the Bible that when the Lord Jesus comes back, the Jews will know this about Jesus, and they will realize that it was Jesus who was the One who would fulfill these prophecies, and they will be very sad; they will mourn that they hadn't realized and believed it before, and then they will turn to Jesus and be saved. So the Day of Atonement seems to be a picture-prophecy of the time in the future when the Jews will see that Jesus is the Messiah who had died for their sins, and they will mourn that they had sinned by rejecting Him. But then they will trust in Him as their Saviour.

So that's the first two of the special days after the long summer. The summer which we had said was like the time now of spreading the Gospel. Yes, after the summer come the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement which are pictures (prophecies) of when the trumpet of God will sound when the Lord Jesus comes back, and a picture-prophecy of the sadness and repentance of the Jews when they will suddenly realize that Jesus is their Messiah but that they had rejected Him. So these seem to me to be picture-prophecies of when the Lord Jesus will someday come back to earth. But let's go on. There are more special days that seem to be picture-prophecies of what will happen after the Lord Jesus comes back again.

All right, then. The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are just a few days apart, aren't they? And then what was the last special time that God gave in His Law to the Jews, a special time that came 5 more days after those two times? Yes, it was the Feast of Tabernacles. So let's think about that now. The Bible says that the Lord will "tabernacle" (live) with us; that is, when Jesus comes back, He will then be King of the whole world and will set up His kingdom for 1000 years, and He will live with us. And during that 1000 years the devil will be tied up and put in a prison for the whole 1000 years! Won't that be wonderful?! This will be a time when many of the regular people will be saved. And the prophet Zechariah says that not just the Jews but all nations will go to Jerusalem to worship God and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles then! Wow! And the Feast of Tabernacles is a picture-prophecy of that 1000 years. We'll talk about what happens after that 1000 years in just a few minutes, so let's go on -- there's more!

Yes, what about the 2 extra holidays (Hanukkah and Purim) from the Jews' history? Well, they seem to me to be picture-prophecies, too. You see, the prophet Ezekiel tells us in the Bible that when the Lord Jesus comes back as King and sets up His kingdom for 1000 years that there will be a great, big temple built in Jerusalem. And it seems that Hanukkah (which celebrates when the Lord's temple was cleaned) might be a picture-prophecy of this beautiful new temple that will be built during the 1000 years that Jesus is King here on earth. Of course, this temple will be in Jerusalem. And in the books of Zechariah and Ezekiel, the Bible tells us that after the Lord Jesus comes back, that people from all over the world (both Jews and people who aren't Jews) will gather in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles and worship the Lord there.

But what about Purim, the second and last extra, special time? Remember, this was to celebrate when the Jews had rest from their enemies during the time of Esther, wasn't it?

Well, remember, after the Jews had left Egypt, for 40 years they had been in the wilderness, hadn't they? And as they had been traveling through the wilderness during those 40 years, they had lived in tents and booths. But after the 40 years, they had rest from their travelings. Why? Because they had reached the Promised Land of Canaan, and then they had houses to live in. This was then a better time for them, wasn't it?

And I think that this is a picture of what will happen after the Lord Jesus comes back. You see, the Bible tells us that when Jesus comes back and after the kingdom of 1000 years is over, that then there will be an even better time, too.

Yes, the Bible tells us that at the end of the 1000 years with the Lord Jesus being King on

earth, that the devil will be let out of his prison for just a little while. There will be a battle, but then the Lord Jesus will win this battle (of course!), and the devil will be thrown into the lake of fire. And the devil will have to stay there forever and ever and will never be able to do anything bad to anyone ever again! And then God will make the world like new again and will send the glorious city, the New Jerusalem, down from heaven! And then God will live with us forever and ever! And then there will be no more bad people or bad times or sadness. All Christians will be in the "promised land" of the new heavens and the new earth with the Lord forever! And that will be the end of any bad things ever happening to us, and we will have rest from our enemies forever! Doesn't that sound wonderful?! Yes, that will really be not only a better time for us, it will be the best time, won't it?!

So it seems to me that Purim is a picture-prophecy of this happy time after the 1000 year kingdom after the Lord Jesus comes back to earth. You see, Purim is celebrated at the end of the Jewish year, and it is a celebration about when Queen Esther and her wise older cousin Mordecai saved the Jews from all being killed by Haman and that then they had rest from their enemies. And the Bible gives us prophecies that at the end of the 1000 years when Jesus is King, all Christians will finally have rest forever from our enemies (the devil and bad people), and we will be with the Lord forever.

Yes, Purim is at the end of the Jewish year. After that the Jews start a new year. Well, the end of the 1000 year kingdom is the end of the time where any bad things will ever be able to happen. After that, Christians will begin the happy forever and ever! (Christians can both be Jews and not be Jews, can't they?)

So I think we can see that these 7 special times that God gave to His people the Jews and the 2 other special Jewish times are not only good times of feasting and celebrating, but also, when we look at them all together, they tell a story! Yes, they tell us the story of Jesus, both of His first coming and of His future second coming. How wonderful! Let's very quickly go over them again.

The first holidays in the Spring time tell the story of when the sinless Jesus (the Lamb of God) came to earth the first time and died on Passover to save us from our sins, and after we trust in the Lord then we should try not to sin (not have "leaven" in our lives), and then Jesus was resurrected (alive again) on the Feast of Firstfruits, and then 7 weeks later the apostles told the big crowd about Jesus during the harvest celebration of the Feast of Weeks, and thousands were saved, a sort of "harvest" of souls. And then, remember, there is the whole summer where there are no feasts, where people were working in their fields. And that is like the time after Jesus went back to heaven (where He is now). And that's the time we're living in now. And during this time we're working to tell people of the good news, the Gospel, that God loves them and that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead, and if they trust in Him, they will be saved. It's sort of like we're "planting the seeds" of the Gospel in people, isn't it?

But then, though it hasn't happened yet, the Lord Jesus will someday come back to earth the second time. And the heavenly trumpet will be blown (remember the trumpets on the F