

Leviticus 23:1-22 | Sunday August 24, 2025

The book of Leviticus is full of instructions as God prepares His people to live in His presence. They are no longer slaves in Egypt but a free nation. God is spending time instructing them what their culture, traditions, and pattern of life should look like. In Chapter 23 God gives the Israelites their **holiday calendar**. Our national Holidays have developed over time with each one having a longer or shorter history. It was not until 1870 that the first federal holidays were set. God on the other hand, set up His appointed feasts, right as they became a free nation. The term “appointed feast” means **place of meeting, agreed time, appointed time**. It is the same word used for the tabernacle of tent of **meeting**. God is setting up the yearly calendar for His people and building into it **appointed times to meet with them**. Each feast had a unique focus and was to remind Israel of important truths that God did not want them to forget.

Leviticus 23:1-3 ESV

- (1) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
- (2) “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.**
- (3) “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.**

As God gives the instructions for His appointed feasts, He starts the whole section by reminding His people of the weekly Sabbath they are to keep. God wanted to imbed their culture with constant reminders who He was and what He had done for them. The sabbath was no different, it was to remind them of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 ESV

- (12) “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.
- (13) Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
- (14) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. **On it you shall not do any work,** you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.
- (15) **You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt,** and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.
Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

When the Israelites were slaves in Egypt they could not take a day off to rest. God wanted a weekly rest to remind them of what He had accomplished for them. **They could rest because He did the work,** He redeemed them from Egypt. God’s instructions for the Sabbath are simple, and it was meant to be enjoyable. It was man who then took this idea of rest and dissected it to become a day of rules and stress. **We are so prone to get focused on the details/ tradition and in the end miss the heart.** The same is happening throughout the church today. We are to rest in His finished work.

Hebrews 4:9-13 ESV

- (9) So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,**
- (10) for whoever has entered God's rest has also **rested from his works as God did from His.**
- (11) **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
- (12) **For the word of God is living and active,** sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and **discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**
- (13) And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Nowhere in the New Testament are church-age believers called to observe a weekly Sabbath day. We are called to observe the principal that was always behind the Sabbath, resting in God's work. We are called to strive to enter His rest. We are to be **zealous, eager, make every effort** to rest in what Jesus accomplished on the cross. It is the Word that helps us pursue this rest. Left to ourselves we want to go to work, and add to salvation. It is the Word that comes into our lives and discerns what is going on in our hearts. It is amazing how hard rest is for us. This weekly reminder of resting in God was then expanded to multiple feasts throughout the year.

Leviticus 23:4-8 NAS95

- (4) 'These are **the appointed times of the LORD**, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.
- (5) 'In the **first month, on the fourteenth day of the month** at twilight is the **LORD'S Passover.**
- (6) 'Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is **the Feast** of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.
- (7) '**On the first day you shall have a holy convocation;** you shall not do any laborious work.
- (8) 'But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. **On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.'**"

God started the Jewish calendar when He redeemed them out of Egypt, this is why the Passover is in the first month which is during the spring. **God instructed the Israelites in Egypt to spread the blood of the lamb onto their door post** so that they He would Passover them in the judgment (Ex 12). **As long as an Israelite trusted in the blood no one in their family died that night.** God also instructed them to make unleavened bread which fit practically because they left Egypt in such a hurry that the bread did not rise (Ex 12:8; 39). The Passover lamb was killed on the 14th and then the feast of unleavened bread was to start the next day, extending from the 15th to the 21st. God is giving these instructions a year after the first Passover (Ex 40:17), just in time for Israel to celebrate it for the second time at the foot of Mount Sinai (Num 9:1-5). This is another Hebrew word for feast and means a **pilgrimage, procession, round dance, festival**, they were not solemn occasions but meant to be a celebration.

Many debate how many feasts their actually are because some are so interrelated to each other they practically become one feast. This is the case of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. 3 feast in particular are unique because once Israel was in the promised land all the men who could needed to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate them.

Exodus 23:15-17 ESV

(15) You shall keep **the Feast of Unleavened Bread**. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed.

(16) You shall keep **the Feast of Harvest**, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep **the Feast of Ingathering** at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.

(17) **Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD.**

The Jews were to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the **Passover** (Feast of Unleavened bread), **Pentecost** (Feast of Harvest), and the **Feast of Tabernacles** (Feast of Ingathering). All three of these three feasts involved a participatory element. To celebrate the Passover, each family had to be in Jerusalem to kill the Passover lamb.

Deuteronomy 16:5-6 ESV

(5) **You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns** that the LORD your God is giving you, (6) but at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make His name dwell in it, **there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice**, in the evening at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt.

God wanted His people together in Jerusalem to celebrate what He accomplished. He wanted a yearly reminder that they had been freed from slavery through the blood of a lamb. He wanted them to be reminded of who they were; redeemed people. When Israel split as a nation, North and South, this was one of the first things King Jeroboam tried to get rid of.

1 Kings 12:26-27; 32 ESV

(26) And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David.

(27) **If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem**, then the heart of this people **will turn again to their lord**, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." (28) **So the king took counsel** and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, "You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, **who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.**"

(32) And Jeroboam appointed **a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the feast that was in Judah**, and he offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.

King Jeroboam knew how God desired these Feasts to work. Each year the northern tribes were to go back to Jerusalem to celebrate what God had done for them. **Jeroboam rightly feared that it would keep the people's hearts close to God.** To stop this he offered a counterfeit; two golden calves who were to be worshiped in a random month he decided. King Jeroboam did not act alone, He sought counsel. This serves as a warning for us. **Just because we get advice from someone does not mean it was true wisdom. If Israel understood the heart of the Passover Jeroboam's calves would have been rejected.** Instead Israel only saw the tradition, so they were fine with the change. Truth matters. The Passover was to celebrate the blood of the lamb and what God had done not just a random tradition to be blindly followed. The next celebration happened during the feast of unleavened bread.

Leviticus 23:9-14 ESV

(9) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

(10) “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,**

(11) 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.**

(12) 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.

(13) And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah 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.

(14) 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.

This is the feast of firstfruits, and **marked the very beginning of the barley harvest**. The Jews were to bring with them, the first sheaf of barley they collected. This was waved up to God to thank Him for another year of provision. **This would take place on the Sunday, after the Sabbath that was during the feast of unleavened bread**. They could not continue in the harvest or eat any of it until the firstfruit was offered to God. The last Spring feast took place 50 days after this Sabbath.

Leviticus 23:15-22 ESV

(15) “You shall count **seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath**, from the day that you **brought the sheaf of the wave offering**.

(16) **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.** (17) 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.

(18) 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.

(19) And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings.

(20) 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.

(21) 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.

(22) “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.”

The Feast of Weeks is better known as Pentecost and was the second feast Jews were to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate. This was the last of the Spring Feasts. It is 50 days after the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened bread so it would always be on a Sunday. The Feast of Weeks celebrated the

wheat harvest. Instead of unprocessed barley like the offering for firstfruits, **this time you were to bring two loaves of leavened bread.** These leavened loaves were waved up to God because leaven could not be given on the altar and it was in thanksgiving for the harvest, with the hope of more to come. **Not only did God redeem them at the Passover but sustained them in the harvest. The Feast of Weeks is unique to the three feasts Israelites had to travel for, because God did not anchor it to a historical event of the nation.**

These Spring Feasts are amazing to look at because **God used this calendar that He gave to Israel as a blueprint for Jesus' first coming.** These Feasts find their fulfillment in Him.

Luke 22:7-8 ESV

(7) Then came the day **of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.**

(8) So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, **"Go and prepare the Passover for us,** that we may eat it."

Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples in Jerusalem as the feast of unleavened bread was about to start. As the nation had their lambs killed to celebrate what the blood of the lamb accomplished, the true lamb of God was sent to the cross. The blood on the door post always pointed to the perfect offering of His blood.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 ESV

(6) Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

(7) Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, **as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**

(8) **Let us therefore celebrate the festival,** not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, **but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

This fulfillment was not lost on Paul. He declares that **Jesus is the Passover lamb. It is His blood that we can find our rest and life in.** Then immediately after the Passover starts the feast of unleavened bread. Through the cross we are now declared holy. We have been given Jesus' righteousness and are justified from all our sins. **Positionally in God's sight we are now unleavened.** We celebrate this by reflecting this truth daily in our lives. **Israel was not to use the leaven of Egypt in their bread,** but to start fresh with the Exodus. We are to live in our new life in Christ, and not let the leaven of our sin permeate our new life. Then after Jesus was crucified, His body was in the grave for the Sabbath during the feast of Unleavened Bread. **This means that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, at the Feast of Firstfruits.**

1 Corinthians 15:20-23 ESV

(20) But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

(21) For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also **the resurrection of the dead.**

(22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

(23) **But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.**

None of this happened haphazardly. God set up this calendar more than **1400 years** before Jesus came and His death and resurrection perfectly fit each feast God set up. Just as the firstfruit offering had to be given before any of the barley was enjoyed **Jesus had to be the first one resurrected before anyone else could be.** Then fifty days later from the Sabbath was

Pentecost.

Acts 2:1; 4 Legacy Standard Bible

(1) **And when the day of Pentecost had fully come**, they were all together in one place.
 (4) **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Pentecost was fulfilled, when the Holy Spirit came and started the Church. God was dwelling in His people. **This feast that had no historical ties was now tied to the creation of the mystery of the Old Testament, the body of Christ, the church.** Just as Pentecost was celebrated with leavened loaves of bread God knows that His church is made up of sinners. He still chooses to use us and have relationship with us.

God’s word is so real and practical. The feast of unleavened bread shows us our Justification and what the blood of the Passover lamb accomplished for us. We are declared unleavened. **Then Jesus is the firstfruit of the resurrection, and we as the church are a part of His harvest.** We go through the process of sanctification, because we are all sinners learning to grow closer to Him, **practically we still have leaven.**

James 1:17-18 ESV

(17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom **there is no variation or shadow due to change.**
 (18) **Of His own will** He brought us forth by the word of truth, **that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**

There is no change in God, His plan that He set forth before the foundation of the world is being brought to completion. We are a part of the firstfruits of His plan! These Spring feasts are fulfilled in Christ first coming and that is what makes the Fall feasts we will look at next week so exciting, **their fulfillment is still to come!**

Event	Scripture References	When	Significance
Passover <i>(Pesach)</i>	Ex. 12:1-14; Lev. 23:5 ; Num. 9:1-14; Num. 28:16; Deut. 16:1-7	14th day of the 1st month (Nisan) (In the Spring around March/ April)	-Commemorated God's deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt. -Jews observe the Passover meal.
	Feast of Unleavened Bread	Ex. 12:15-20; Ex. 13:3-10; Lev. 23:6-8 ; Num. 28:17-25; Deut. 16:3,4,8	15th day of the 1st month (Nisan) until 21st -Ate unleavened bread for 7 days -No work on 1st day/ 7 th Day -1st of three annual trips to Jerusalem

	Feast of Firstfruits	Lev. 23:9-14 ; Num. 28:26	1st Sunday after Nisan 15th (The Sunday during the feast of Unleavened bread)	-Marked the beginning of the barley harvest -The first harvested barley was offered to God.
Feast of Weeks aka Pentecost aka Feasts of Harvests aka Day of Firstfruits (<i>Shavu'ot</i>)		Ex. 23:16; Ex 34:22; Lev. 23:15-21 ; Num. 28:26; Deut. 16:9-12	50 days after the 1st Sabbath following the Passover. So, it is always on a Sunday.	-Celebrated the wheat harvest and God's continued provision. -2nd of three annual trips to Jerusalem

Edited from **Jewish Feasts Commemorated in Scripture by Wayne D. Turner**
