

## THE BIBLICAL CALENDAR AND THE FESTIVALS OF JEHOVAH

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Did the Creator of heaven and earth ordain a calendar for the spiritual blessing of His covenant people? What religious calendar do you follow? Do you celebrate the festivals of Jehovah or the conferences and seminars of man? The source of law you observe determines the God you serve. You cannot obey two opposing law systems. Jehovah God is the sole source of true law. Whose calendar will you follow? What great purpose did the Creator have in mind when He ordained His annual festivals? Is your own salvation and the redemption of Israel depicted in the festivals of the Bible? What great future events in earth's history are prefigured in the annual festivals of the Bible? Will you explore the festivals of the Bible? Is this your time to come to an understanding of how the annual festivals of the Bible can make your journey through this life much more spiritually exciting?

Before the foundations of the earth were laid, long before Adam and Eve were created, our eternal God ordained the annual festivals for the benefit of His covenant people. According to the revealed Word of God, our Creator “. . . **made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day** (the sun), **and the lesser light** (the moon) **to rule the night: . . .**” (*Gen. 1:16*). Yes, the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens were ordained to separate day from night, but that is not all. These heavenly bodies were ordained for “. . . **signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years**” (*Gen. 1:14*).

The English word *seasons* is from the Hebrew root *Moade*, meaning “*An appointment, i.e. a fixed time or season; specially a festival, an assembly as convened for a definite purpose; technically the congregation; by extension, the place of meeting, also a signal (as appointed beforehand), assembly, congregation, feast, (set) time appointed*” (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*).

The Eternal created the sun to measure days and the moon to number the months of the year. The Psalmist David echoed this truth when he declared: “**He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down**” (*Psa. 104:19*). This truth is further punctuated in Psalm 81:2-3: “**Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.**” The English words *month* and *moons* are translated from the same Hebrew root word #2320 *chodesh* (*kho'desh*), from 2318; *the new moon; by implication a month: month (-ly), new moon, #2318 chadash, (khaw-dash') a primary root; to be new; cause to rebuild; renew, repair*” (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*). When measuring time, the words *month* and *moon* are used interchangeably in Scripture.

The Eternal Jehovah ordained the weekly Sabbath and annual Festivals for the worship and honor of His own name among His covenant people but this is not all. He established the Sabbath and Festivals for the blessing and benefit of His people for all of time and eternity. When the Kingdom of God is restored to this earth we will still be

observing and celebrating the weekly Sabbath and annual Festivals enumerated in Scripture (Isa. 66:22-23; Ezek. 46:1-3; Zech. 14:16).

The spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health of the body are enhanced and strengthened by including the weekly Sabbath and the annual holy days as part of your life. Observing these appointed times gives you not only spiritual strength and encouragement, but also provides posts around which your life becomes organized. When the weekly Bible Sabbath and annual Festivals are circumvented, ignored, what happens? It is certain that we ignore them at our own peril. When we reject God's Sabbath and festival holy days, fallen man quickly replaces them with counterfeit days. Any rejection of God's Law simply means that we transfer to humanistic, counterfeit law.

The need for worship and fellowship is so compelling that fallen human nature immediately creates a counterfeit religious calendar to fill the void left from rejecting God's calendar. Instead of the biblical Sabbath of the seventh day of the week, another day, Sunday, the first day of the week, becomes the Sabbath. Instead of commemorating the biblical feast of Passover and Unleavened bread, pagan Easter becomes the center post for spring. Instead of celebrating the biblical Feast of Tabernacles, man chooses instead the Babylonian celebration now called Christmas. When fallen man rejects God's Sabbath and holy days, he always ends up creating a counterfeit.

A perfect example of how sinful, unregenerate man counterfeits the biblical holy days is found in I Kings 12. At the death of Solomon in 975 BC, the nation of Israel was separated into two kingdoms, with Jeroboam taking the ten tribes to the north and forming the Northern Kingdom of Israel, with its capital in Samaria. Rehoboam, son of Solomon, occupied the throne in the Southern Kingdom with Judah, Benjamin, and a portion of Levi. When this division occurred, Jeroboam immediately went to work counterfeiting the festivals of Jehovah. The Israelites worshipped the golden calves in Bethel, together with an order of priests made up of the lowest of the people excluding the tribe of Levi. Thus, a counterfeit system of festivals was likewise instituted: ***“And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made”*** (I Kings 12:33).

Modern Israel has fared no better than Israel did under Jeroboam. Millions of Israelites throughout the Anglo-Saxon world are pleased to embrace without compunction an entire system of counterfeit religious holidays including pagan Easter (Ishtar), Christmas, Valentine's Day, Halloween, and other holidays in place of the historic, biblical holy days of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. The historical roots of the various pagan holidays now included in the religious calendar of most of the churches in the Christian West are rooted in ancient Babylon. Modern Israel, not unlike ancient Israel, is snared in a system of counterfeit festivals. Israel will either honor and observe the biblical holy days or will end up with a counterfeit system of worship. The Adamic creation was made to worship their Creator.

In her sinful state, however, she will either honor the prescribed holy days or will end up with a counterfeit religious calendar.

## **THE BIBLICAL HOLY DAYS**

The basic biblical calendar is established in Exodus chapters 12 and 13, Leviticus 23, Numbers 28 & 29, and Deuteronomy 16. A careful examination of Bible Law and history (I and II Chronicles) together with the prophetic books of the Bible provides ample information to build the completed Sabbath and Festival Calendar Jehovah intended for His covenant people to observe. The following brief resume points believers in the right direction regarding the biblical calendar. A point of beginning is found in Leviticus 23:1-2: ***“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.”***

## **THE WEEKLY SABBATH**

The weekly Sabbath of the seventh day of the week is the first and most important of all festival days. The words *week* and *seventh* both derive their origin from the same Hebrew root word. The whole meaning of the week is set forth in the seven day week outlined in Genesis 1 with the *seventh day* being *sanctified* and *blessed* as a day of rest. ***“Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings”*** (Lev. 23:3). This weekly Sabbath of the *seventh day of the week* was incorporated into the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11) and established as a *perpetual covenant* between Jehovah and His people Israel. ***“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant”*** (Exodus 31:16).

The weekly Sabbath of the seventh day of the week prefigures the thousand-year sabbatical rest that will be ushered in at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the thousand-year day or rest (Revelation 20:1-6). On the seventh day of each week, Christians enter a rest period in Jesus Christ that typifies the coming millennial rest of the Kingdom of God. The weekly Sabbath is therefore a prophetic forecast of this future millennial rest in the Kingdom of God. The seventh day of every week is to be celebrated with a *“holy convocation”* (Lev. 23:3, Isa. 66:23, Ezek. 46:1-3, Heb. 4:9). The Sabbath of the seventh day of the week marked freedom from slavery (Exodus 20:10-11, Deut. 5:15), and a rest in Christ from hard labor. The seventh day of the week was forever *sanctified* and *blessed* as the Sabbath and no other day of the week can be designated as the Sabbath (Exodus 16:23-30).

## **THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS**

The biblical calendar calls for a special assembly or convocation at the beginning of each month. The celebration of new moons (new months) makes all of time relevant to God, establishes God as the focus of our lives, and enables the believer to live with a spiritual vision for dominion. At the celebration of the beginning of each new biblical month, the

believer can establish goals and set spiritual priorities to make life relevant to Jesus Christ and His Word. Jehovah commanded His covenant people Israel, saying, ***“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets . . .”*** (Num. 10:10). The sounding of the trumpet at the beginning of each new month proclaims that Jesus Christ is Lord, His blood has redeemed us, and the Holy Spirit has sanctified us as His covenant people.

Prophetically, the new moon (month) points to that glorious age when all the redeemed in Jesus Christ will worship God in His restored Kingdom on earth: ***“And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD”*** (Isa. 66:22). The incorporation of the weekly Sabbath and the new moons (beginning of months) is confirmed in Ezekiel 46:3: ***“Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the Sabbaths and in the new moons.”***

## **THE PASSOVER**

Passover is a day that memorializes the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. This day is to be observed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib, the first month of the biblical year (Exo. 12:1-2), corresponding to our late March or early April of each year. The first of Abib is always determined by finding the new moon nearest the vernal equinox in the spring. Fourteen days counting from this new moon always marks the date for biblical Passover, which is to be observed as a memorial to the death of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb: ***“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever”*** (Exod. 12:14).

Passover is a permanent feast—meant to be observed for all of time. Addressing His apostles at the observance of the Passover immediately preceding His crucifixion, Christ declared, ***“ . . . this do in remembrance of me . . .”*** (Luke 22:19). Many years later, the Holy Spirit confirmed through St. Paul the continuation of the Passover memorial: ***“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”*** (1 Cor. 11:26). The redeemed children of Jehovah will continue to observe Passover with Christ in His Kingdom: ***“But I say unto you I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom”*** (Matt. 26:29).

Prophetically, the Passover fulfilled all the great Messianic prophecies calling for the Lamb of God, the Son of God, to be sacrificed for the sins of His people (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22). Theologically, Passover points to justification for the believer, and by the shedding of blood, the ratification of the New Covenant with Judah and Israel (Jer. 31:31-34).

## **FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day feast that immediately follows Passover. The first and last day of this feast are high, holy days (Exodus 12:15-16). This feast is an

annual call for the removal of sin from the lives of the redeemed people of God and also is to be observed for ever: ***“And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever”*** (Exodus 12:17). The church of God at Corinth was commanded to keep this feast about AD 59, many years after the Resurrection: ***“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”*** (I Cor. 5:8). Moreover, St. Paul and other believers were keeping this feast as recorded in Acts 20:6.

Prophetically, the Feast of Unleavened Bread prefigured the removal of sin from the redeemed people, setting them free from the bondage of sin and death. Speaking of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit declared: ***“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”*** (II Cor. 5:21). Further, I Peter 2:24 reads: ***“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”*** Prophetically, the Feast of Unleavened Bread prefigured Jesus Christ as the true bread from heaven (John 6:48-58). His elect continue to feed on Christ’s Body and Blood, in communion, to remove the guilt (leaven of sin) from their lives. The annual observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread continually calls redeemed Israel to remove the leaven of sin from their lives.

## **THE WAVE SHEAF OFFERING**

The Wave Sheaf Offering was an annual event falling on the day after the weekly Sabbath of Unleavened Bread. ***“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it”*** (Lev. 23:10-11).

Prophetically, the Wave Sheaf Offering, occurring annually on the Sunday or morrow that followed the weekly Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, prefigured the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This firstfruit offering of the barley during the Passover marked the future Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead: ***“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”*** (I Cor. 15:20).

The celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead continues to be a major annual event during the week of Unleavened Bread. On the morrow that follows the weekly Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (always on a Sunday, the first day of the week), this Resurrection celebration is to be observed. Passover is celebrated as a memorial to His death (Luke 22:19-20) and the Wave Sheaf Offering as an annual celebration of the firstfruits of the Resurrection in Jesus Christ’s triumphant and miraculous rising from the dead (Matthew 28). This also helps Christians anticipate the resurrection of all the dead in Christ at His appearing in glory (I Thess. 4:16, Rev. 20:6).

## PENTECOST

Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks, sometimes also called Feast of Firstfruits, is another commanded feast of Jehovah (Exodus 23:14-19, Lev. 23:15-21, Num. 28:26, and Deut. 16:9-12). The Day of Pentecost is marked by the wave sheaf offered on the day that follows the weekly Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:9-11). The count for Pentecost begins on the morrow (or Sunday) that follows this weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread. Seven complete weekly Sabbaths (seven weeks of days) will commence on the 50<sup>th</sup> day, the day of Pentecost, which always falls on a Sunday because the count begins on the “morrow,” or the Sunday that follows the weekly Sabbath of Unleavened Bread.

The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the giving of the Law to Israel at Mt. Sinai during the third month following the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 19). The Law was given to accuse, convict of sin, and condemn the sinner (all Israelites), necessitating the ritual of blood sacrifice under the Old Covenant and the blood of Jesus Christ as the last sacrifice for sin under the New Covenant.

Theologically, Pentecost celebrates the advent of the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit upon national Israel and the work of sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the covenant people. While Passover prefigures the **justification** of the elect in Jesus Christ, Pentecost prefigures the work of **sanctification** made effectual by the Holy Spirit. Prophetically the Feast of Pentecost following the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead celebrates the visitation of the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit upon national Israel as the pledge for the downpour or latter rain yet to come. Pentecost continues to be observed in celebration and hope of the **latter rain** upon fully redeemed Israel at the return of Jesus Christ in glory.

## THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

On the first day of the seventh biblical month, Ethanim, is to be a special convocation with the blowing of trumpets: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation”* (Lev. 23:23-24).

Theologically, this Feast prefigures and signals the one event that will complete all of Christological history. The return of Jesus Christ with all of His holy angels in power and glory will signal the fulfillment of the great eschatological promises secured by the covenants of our sovereign God. Prophetically, this unfulfilled feast is an annual celebration that anticipates the return of Jesus Christ and the regathering of redeemed Israel from all the lands of their dispersion into the land promised to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-Israel (Isaiah 11:11-12, 27:12-13, Ezekiel 37:21-28). The annual Feast of Trumpets is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month in expectation of the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the regathering of redeemed Israel from all lands of their dispersion, the marriage supper of

the Lamb, and the restoration of the Kingdom of God on earth. All of the synoptic Gospels speak of this great event, as Mark does here: ***“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven”*** (Mark 13:24-27).

Each year on the Day of Trumpets, the faithful in Jesus Christ spend the day in lawful worship, singing great eschatological hymns and hearing preaching and teaching that concern the Second Coming and the Regathering of redeemed Israel from their long exile to the land promised in covenantal perpetuity to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-Israel.

### **THE DAY OF ATONEMENT**

The Day of Atonement begins at sunset on the ninth day of Ethanim (seventh month of the biblical calendar) and culminates at sunset on the tenth day. ***“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls . . . And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God”*** (Lev. 23:27-28). This is an annual day of fasting, prayer, supplication, and atoning for sin on the part of the redeemed people of God. On this day, every soul is to fast and afflict itself in sackcloth and ashes, abstaining from any pleasures, all work, and totally focusing on atoning for sin. The redeemed children of God must gather in holy convocation and atone for their sin by partaking of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

Prophetically, the Day of Atonement prefigures the final judgment upon sin and the means by which the saved in Jesus Christ, whose sins have already been judged, will be spared the wrath of God and His certain judgment upon the wicked and all their works. The return of Jesus Christ to this earth will be a glorious event for those redeemed in His blood and whose sin has been already judged at His Cross, but this event will mean judgment for all who have rejected Jesus Christ and His Gospel. This judgment is graphically described in Matthew 25:31-34: ***“When the Son of man shall come in his glory . . . then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”*** Additional confirmation of this judgment may be found in Daniel 7:9-12, Revelation 19:11-16; 20:11-15.

### **THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES**

The Feast of Tabernacles is a seven-day celebration beginning on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the seventh month, Ethanim, and running through the 21<sup>st</sup>. About it we read: ***“And the***

***LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD***” (Lev. 23:33-34). The first day of this feast is to be a holy convocation, with no servile work done (Lev. 23:35). Further, we read: ***“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath”*** (Lev. 23:39). Again, as with the Feast of Passover, both the first and the last day are high, holy days.

The Feast of Tabernacles is an annual celebration filled with great joy for the redeemed children of God because this feast honors the incarnation of Jehovah God into human form in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, the Feast of Tabernacles points to and prefigures the time when God will tabernacle among His people in the restored Kingdom of God and is therefore an uncompleted festival. ***“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one”*** (Zech. 14:9). ***“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God”*** (Rev. 21:3). ***“Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them . . . and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people”*** (Ezekiel. 37:26-27).

The annual celebration of Tabernacles acknowledges two great events: the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, God in human form that tabernacled among His people, and the ultimate restoration of the Kingdom when Christ shall return to tabernacle forever among His people.

## **THE LAST GREAT DAY**

The Last Great Day is the eighth-day culmination of the Feast of Tabernacles, a holy convocation in worship and praise to Jehovah God. This Last Great Day celebrates the final, uncompleted eschatological event in earth’s history when the Kingdom shall be delivered up unto the Father. ***“Then cometh the end, when he (Jesus Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”*** (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

This Last Great Day should be celebrated with great joy and expectation of that great day when all of eschatological history will have been consummated, all opposition to the rule of Jesus Christ upon the Throne of David has been defeated, and the Kingdom is delivered unto God the Father for all eternity.

Death shall have been defeated, and paradise, once lost by Adam and Eve, will be fully restored in the new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:1). In that glorious day, it shall be said, ***“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more***

*death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4).*

## **SUMMARY**

As a believer in Jesus Christ, you must understand that all of time must be spent living in relevance to God and His Word. Time is a created reality of God, one of the greatest treasures you possess. You cannot buy time, store it, or use it unwisely without great consequences. Your life is a gift from God. How you live it is your gift to Him. God wants you to make your life count for great things. The wise use of your time is essential for Christian growth and maturity. The weekly Sabbath means that fifty-two Sabbaths a year belong to Him and are to be used for His glory, not your personal ambitions. Research has proven that those who faithfully keep the biblical Sabbath of the seventh day of the week outlive others in the general population by seven to ten years, experience better health, have less stress, and tend toward better mental and spiritual stability in their whole being.

There are seven annual high holy days on the festival calendar that belong to your covenant God and call believers to a designated place and time for holy convocation. These seven days should be celebrated in holy convocations; they are the first and last days of the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and the first and last days of the Feast of Tabernacles. These special designated days signal great and tremendous prophetic events for the covenant people. All the great events of earth’s history and Israel’s sojourn on this earth have occurred in context with these annual holy days. No Christian dare plan for the future without embracing and saving these days for worship of the God of Israel. They are divine appointments with your Creator Jehovah. Do not miss these appointments!