

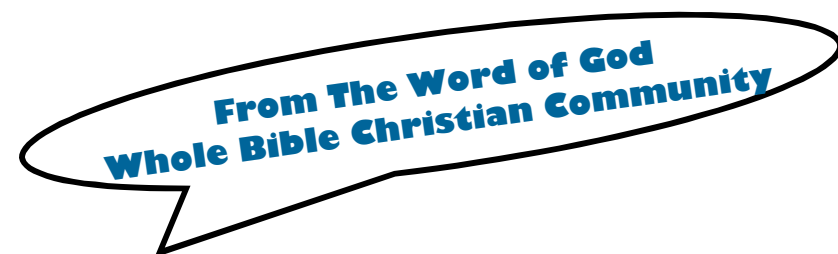
into the wilderness where His living oracles (the Torah - Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 4:11) were delivered to us, and by trusting obedience (faith) we will enter into the final form of His Kingdom, also known as His Rest. By refusing to obey His Ways we will fail to enter (Acts 7:39; Heb. 4:6).

Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." (Heb. 4:6,7 NASB, last part quoting Ps. 95:6-11)

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**Doing everything we can
to get closer to God and
helping others do the
same!**



Christian Faith & Practice Through God's Spring Feasts

Highlights of What's Inside

- Introduction to God's 'times and seasons' or 'appointed times,' and how they relate to the cycles in our lives.
- Biblical guides from a Christian perspective for practicing God's Spring Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Pentecost.
- Some thoughts on where Jesus is in the feasts.
- Easy to follow instructions, in English.

weeding these people out to anyone (Parable of the Tares, also Mat. 13). So we are not called to determine who is “in” and who is “out,” but to continue with discipleship using all of our heart, mind or soul, and strength; to exhort and encourage and correct those others who at least profess to be part of this group.

Paul discusses the nature of the olive tree (another name for Kingdom of God) in Romans 11. He says that branches are broken off due to lack of faith, and other branches are grafted in by faith. Why would branches be broken off unless there was no fruit on them? Therefore we should watch ourselves lest we be found to be without fruit, whether Jew or Gentile. John the Baptist says this is fruit in keeping with repentance (Mat. 3:7-12). This relates back to Genesis 1:11,12, where vegetation bears fruit because of the life God puts in it. The Spirit will produce fruit in us because of the nature of His Life.

I conclude that redeemed people known as an assembly, church or body, have existed from the start as part of larger assemblies or congregations of people or nations, some of which are called by the same names. All Isra’el is not Isra’el, as Paul says, and there are hints all through the Word as to the reality and makeup of this assembly. From giants of the faith such as Abraham and Sarah, Noah, and Moses, to the humble of station such as Ruth; from queens like Esther to judges such as Samson, Deborah and Gideon; from Rahab the harlot to mighty kings like David and Solomon; the one Father has been adding to one body through one faith by one Spirit and one baptism (Eph. 4:4-6).

Pentecost is then, in my opinion, a celebration of freedom (Passover) from captivity (Egypt) and entry into the remnant portion of the Kingdom of God by embracing all of the instructions of the Father. In other words, we left sin and the world system by way of the blood of the Lamb, journeyed

OF THE CONGREGATION (EKKLESIA) I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.” (NASB)

This is a quote from Psalm 22:22, and comparing them both together shows that the Greek word for church (ekklesia) is the same as the Hebrew word for assembly or congregation or “church” (qahal).

I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly (qahal) I will praise You. You who fear the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. (NASB)

Hebrews 4:2 says that the same gathering (assembly, congregation, or church) had the gospel preached to them at Mt. Sinai (Jesus in the Torah).

For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. (NASB)

The Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven) is a related term, except that “body” or “remnant” indicates those that willingly belong to God, while the Kingdom includes (at the present time) additional elements (people and spirits or angels) that do not want the rule of God in their lives (much like a mustard tree has birds – Mat. 13), although in the end they will be weeded out. Of course, God ultimately rules anyway, but in the present form of the Kingdom some people are not very cooperative. These people may look like they are part of the Kingdom, but they will not continue.

Those who “persevere” or “overcome” (the remnant) will be included in the future form of the Kingdom, but those who falter will not. Overcomers produce fruit, pretenders (or tares) do not. This is referred to in parable form by Jesus in Matthew 13. At this time God has not assigned the task of

Christian Faith & Practice through God’s Cycles

*Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. Genesis 1:14,15
NASB*

For all us rookies who are doing our best to follow all of the Word and free ourselves from slavery to the doctrines of men, this article will hopefully provide some small guidance. If it seems like a complicated task to weave God’s Word into your life, or if you can’t figure out exactly where to start, these articles are for you. It’s not really complicated, it just looks that way because we haven’t had the teaching for it. Sorting through all the language and what the Bible says and what other people say can be a little confusing. I prefer starting somewhere, anywhere, and adding more as I learn more. Hear and obey what the Word specifically teaches, then grab hold of other traditional or cultural stuff as you go and as you want.

This article isn’t so much about what to do about the feasts, or how to do them, as it is a description of how they fit together. The next couple of articles will cover more on how to do them. The rhythm set up by the weekly Sabbath and the monthly new moon and the placement of the annual feasts help to regulate our lives, and help condition us for running races and fighting good fights. All of God’s commands are essential for building strong bones and muscles, for improving morale, bolstering the spirit, and for overall maturation.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teach-

ing, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. II Timothy 3:16 NASB

Even the commands we can't understand at first are critical to our conditioning. I think it was Vince Lombardi who said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all" (sort of quoting Hamlet). He could have been taking a page from God's Torah, because working out with His Instructions is the key to a stronger faith walk and elimination of fear. It is not called the Book of Life for nothing; indeed it is nourishing life and health to all of our parts.

The word "disciple" means one who follows a discipline, and the Father's discipline (or discipleship) program, including His feasts or festivals, is the best ever designed. No man has ever done as well to put together a discipleship system that is so perfect for our needs. Compared to the Formula One racing machine of His Word, man's best system is a bicycle. And no matter how hard you pedal, one manpower won't keep up with 800 horsepower. So using a man's discipleship system instead of God's is like trying to win the Grand Prix with a Schwinn. And I would much rather race with the best than pedal with the rest.

The reason why the engine of the Word runs so well is God's authority. The power of God is the fuel for His Word, so His engine is guaranteed to work perfectly. When a man designs a system, its fuel is only the authority of the man who made it. And that's no real kind of power at all. People like Gary Smalley or Bill Gothard mean well, and much of what they teach can be fairly good stuff. But men's opinions (including mine) can't change anyone, only God's Word can. We are not afraid of God's system if we make a mistake (consequences, of course, are another matter entirely), because we have accepted His payment of our entry fee. Falling short of His plan is like being able to walk away after

Membership has always been by Grace through Faith, and there are many members added throughout recorded history, but maybe not as numerous as we could wish for. The point is, there is only one group of people that is God's. Some confusion comes from the fact that these words are also used to describe simple gatherings of people for a particular purpose.

Psalm 74:1 & 2 is perhaps one of the clearer examples of my position. In verse one the psalmist identifies "the sheep of your pasture" which is identical to the word "congregation" used in verse two (see also Scriptures such as Ps. 107:32, 149:1).

O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? Remember Your congregation (edah), which You have purchased of old, Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance; And this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt. (NASB)

Stephen speaks of the "congregation in the wilderness" referring to the gathering of Israel at Mt. Sinai (Acts 7:38,39 *ekklesia*). Stephen also calls the Torah "living oracles."

"This is the one who was in the congregation (ekklesia) in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt..." (NASB)

Hebrews 2:11,12 says that Jesus and the "ones set apart for God" are brothers:

For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST

midst of them than we are at the present. This is pretty much an all-inclusive statement from our Father nailing down exactly what He means without leaving any wiggle room at all.

Two important events happened at this Appointed Time, the memory of which is part of the celebration. These two were also somewhat prophetic, but that is more than this short article can accommodate. The first was the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, and the second was the outpouring of the Spirit in a room full of Jesus' disciples at the Temple (the Temple was known as 'the house'), after the risen Messiah Jesus had ascended to the Father. Each of these by themselves would be a tremendous incentive for joy and celebration because of the freedom they represent. However, it is a mistake to see them as separate events, or mutually exclusive of one another.

When the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai, the Spirit accompanied it (Num. 11:17-29). And when the Spirit outpoured on the disciples, the Torah was also present (Acts 2:11 – mighty deeds of God is The Word or Torah). Both included flames (Ex. 20:1; Ps. 29:7; Acts 7:30) or lightnings (Ex. 19:16, Job 36:29, 37:2-5; Rev. 4:5, 10:3,4), and both had languages associated (trumpeting, voices Ex. 20:2, Rev. 14:2; thunderings II Sam 22:14, John 12:28-29; tongues Job 26:14, 40:9, Ps. 18:13). The Word of God cannot be separated from the Spirit of God, any more than Jesus (who is the Word made flesh) could ever be separated from the Father. They are *echad* (eh-khod), one or unity.

Many people want to believe that The Church started with the outpouring at the Temple. But according to Scripture, this is simply not true. The "congregation," "assembly" or "called out ones" (OT Hebrew qahal pronounced kah-hall, *edah* pronounced eh-daw; NT Greek *ekklesia* pronounced ek-kles-see-ah), has been in existence ever since the beginning. This group of people is also called the "remnant."

slamming our racecar into a wall (kids, do not try this at home).

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. Hebrews 2:14,15 NASB

This doesn't mean that the proliferation of laws is what helps to disciple us, but that God's design is best and we shouldn't modify it. Many people have tried to "help God out" by adding to or subtracting from what He gave us. No matter how well meaning, the result is to destroy what God gave and render the system ineffective. More laws are not the answer; obedience to the existing laws is enough. Why? Because the basic issue is obedience – always has been since the Garden of Eden. The problem is with people, not God or His Words.

Our love for Him is reflected in our willing obedience to His Instructions even without being driven by the lash of having to win. If we fall short we can just re-tune our engine and try again. We've already won, so we can race for the pure joy of racing. Losing the race is unthinkable if we stay dedicated to His Way of running it. Unless, that is, we are just standing around doing nothing but polishing our paint.

I could write a book, and many others have, concerning all the meaning inherent in the appointed times of our Father. But let me give you a few cautionary words before we take off and grab a handful of those meanings. Remember that most of the Jewish leaders in the first century were fully aware of all the details involved with the feasts, but refused to see the Messiah standing right in front of them. It's a good thing He wasn't a bus or they'd of been run over (I know, they kind of were anyway). There is much to be

gained from an intense study and practice of the Word as applied to the Feasts, but there is such a thing as going overboard. While many of the details of themes and traditions are good and true, there are probably some that are not true simply because we don't have Jesus here to explain them to us. So try to get as much as you can out of Jewish or rabbinical interpretations and culture without losing sight of the Big Picture.

The Word of God is hung about with many Jewish flavored decorations that have very profound meaning and application, and I do not want to take anything away from our brethren. But there are also trappings that are not Scriptural. The Word is God's and belongs to all of His people. It is not Jewish, and neither are the Feasts. Let us give credit, respect and even deference to our older Jewish brothers and sisters, let us not begrudge them their place at the head of the table; but remember also they are not the final word on what is right. When a meaningful application is drawn from the Word it is wonderful. When we share these with one another and we help to make each other's walk richer and more fruitful I get really psyched up too. But when these applications become a rule that is placed on an equal footing with Torah and we judge each other by their presence or lack then we have gone too far. Keep in mind that these are appointments with God (Leviticus 23:2), not appointments with people of Jewish persuasion.

Terms describing the Feasts. *Mo'ed* (mow-aid) is a Hebrew word meaning literally "appointed time" or appointment (I Samuel 20:35); appointed place (Joshua 8:14); appointed sign (Joshua 20:38); or appointed day (I Samuel 13:11). This word is also sometimes translated "times and seasons" or "set time," (II Samuel 20:5) and was first used in our Genesis 1:14 reference above. God set the stars and planets in place specifically to help us regulate our relationship with Him through the times and seasons. There is every

down, get funky, and get loose. All of us are to come together in one place, the "place where He puts His name (Deut. 16:11,16)." This is called a "holy convocation" which in Hebrew is *miqra qodesh* (mee-kraw ko-desh).

The theological implications of this statement are too involved to delve into here. But this is one of the so-called "pilgrimage feasts," meaning we have to go to a place that He chooses, and perhaps this could be understood as gathering together in a really large group. For a long time the actual place was understood to be Jerusalem because of the Temple, but now in my opinion it just might mean something a teensy bit different. Where is His name now? Has He chosen a different place? If we are a Temple, what does this mean for the feast location?

We are not to be at the party empty handed – we are supposed to give a freewill offering (Deut. 16:10, 17). The sacrifices and offerings are listed in Leviticus 23:17-20, and among these are two loaves of bread made with leaven that are brought from the dwellings of each person (verse 17). I suppose this might be called B.Y.O.B.....for Bring Your Own Bread. When they make bread for Sabbath (called challah), many Jews will take a small portion of the dough and "wave" it before the Father, then burn it up. This, I believe, is related to the wave offering of First Fruits. So, the 50th day is a Sabbath, with a *miqra qodesh* (gathering), a feast with rejoicing, and a freewill offering along with two loaves of bread.

I want you to notice that the "stranger" is included in this celebration. The word for stranger (*ger*, pronounced gare) applies to the nations, also known as Gentiles or *goyim*. This is for those hair-splitting *goyim* who want to try and prove that the Feast is for Jews only. Even if you want to limit the meaning to "in the midst of," I think we can all agree that due to the scattering of Israel we can't be any MORE in the

Christian Faith & Practice through Pentecost

“Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name.” (Deut. 16:10,11 NASB)

Pentecost is another of the seven annual appointments” (literally) that the Father set up for His children, summarized in Leviticus 23 (Sabbath being a weekly appointment). Pentecost (or Shavuot shaw-voo-oat), comes on the day after seven complete Sabbaths are counted from the day of First Fruits (Hebrew HaBikkurim), which is the first Sabbath after Passover. So Pentecost ends up on a Sunday (Lev. 23:16). Pentecost is also known as the Feast of Weeks, and the counting of the Sabbaths is called the counting of the Omer. An omer is a measure of grain, and First Fruits is the beginning of the offering of the barley crop to the Father.

As the verses above show, this is **a time of rejoicing** (Deut. 16:9-12). Oh no, not another party! I have pointed out before (and will gleefully point out as many times as I think I need to), that it seems every time we turn around our Father wants us to celebrate, rejoice, party, and just generally kick back and whoop it up. This is another one of those times. According to the Word, it includes everybody – kids, servants, strangers, orphans, widows, even Levites can get

scriptural reason to believe that God also uses the “set times” as markers for intervention into the affairs of men.

“When I select an appointed time, it is I who judge with equity. The earth and all who dwell in it melt; it is I who have firmly set its pillars.” Selah. Psalm 75:2,3 NASB

You will arise and have compassion on Zion; for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come. Psalm 102:13 NASB

The biblical feasts (mo’edim or mow-aid-eem, plural of mo’ed) have three aspects: past, present, and future. We are reminded what God did for us, what He is doing for us, and especially what He will do for us. The word ‘remember’ means ‘to speak or act on behalf of.’ So to remember God through the feasts is to speak and act on behalf of what He has done, is doing, and will do for His people. Ain’t it great? We can actually ‘remember’ the future! We remind ourselves and teach others of His past actions in history and comfort one another with what He will do. And we personally apply the messages from both past and future in daily living.

Another word to describe what we do in the feasts is ‘rehearse.’ By ‘acting out’ the elements of His plans that are yet to come, we teach our children and witness to the world of His coming intervention. We give glory to Him because of His love, wisdom and power displayed for us when He intervened in the affairs of men, and for His promises to intervene in a more permanent fashion soon. These appointments are part of His Word we proclaim so others ‘hear and fear.’

“Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, ‘Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.’” Deuteronomy 4:10 NASB

'It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.' (Jeremiah 33:9 NASB)

Another phrase or term for the feasts is sometimes translated 'holy convocation.' The Hebrew words are mi'qrah qodesh (mee-kraw koe-desh), meaning literally an "assembly of sanctified ones." God instructs us to gather together on specific feast days (Sabbath, first and seventh day of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Yom Kippur, and the first and eighth days of Tabernacles – about 59 days a year normally). This is probably one of the things the writer of Hebrews was referring to when he said not to forsake it.

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25 NASB

The Hebrew word for 'gathering' (similar to assembly) also means 'harvesting,' which applies to both crops, and people, for instance those who belong to Him at the end of the age.

It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain, as his arm harvests the ears, Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain in the valley of Rephaim. Isaiah 17:5 NASB

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord

of the Exodus and perhaps the story of the execution of the Messiah, and have a nice meal. Get a Jewish calendar and you can start keeping track of the placement of the appointed times with your family, and try to purchase one of the excellent books written to help with celebrating and "keeping" this appointment with our God and Messiah.

"Obey and pay attention to everything I am ordering you to do, so that things will go well with you and with your descendants after you forever, as you do what Adonai sees as good and right. When Adonai your God has cut off ahead of you the nations your are entering in order to dispossess, and when you have dispossessed them and are living in their land; be careful, after they have been destroyed ahead of you, not to be trapped into following them; so that you inquire after their gods and ask, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I want to do the same.'" (Deut. 12:28-30 CJB)

or kid and slaughtering it, and I may do it this year. It is not a pleasant prospect to find a perfect lamb or kid, feed it and care for it for four days while it wanders around the back yard bleating, become attached to it, then slaughter it myself. However, at least one meaning that is shown by this is that the sacrifice for sin is very, very personal, and the price for my disobedience is very, very hard to pay.

One year we attended a Seder (the word means “order” and is the traditional form of the meal) at our church. Unfortunately, it was just treated as a novelty, which removed some of the meaning. Another year we did a Seder at home that was very good. Last year my wife bought some prepared lamb and we roasted it and ate it with a meal and some bitter herbs (horseradish) and unleavened bread. I had a staff at hand, and we ate it in haste. One day I may try to purchase a lamb or kid and go the whole route; if we can we will try to find a family or two to share it with, because it is quite a bit of meat for one meal (you have to burn up the remainder before morning). The main point I’m trying to make is this is a growth process, and I add more as I understand more. If you would like to participate with us let me know.

For leaven removal, our family makes it a project to read the ingredients on all the food in the house and remove the ones with leaven, yeast, or baking soda. You can take them to the garage or storage building if you want – just remove them from the house and don’t eat them during Unleavened Bread. Bring them back afterward if you want, until you get used to planning so you don’t buy a bunch before hand. You would be surprised at how many foods are made with leavening. You can use the standard *matzah* wafers or any other bread without leaven for the week.

Remember, don’t allow the details to distract you from beginning to making room for this feast. Start somewhere, even if you just mark the day on the calendar, read the story

has come. II Thessalonians 2:1 NASB

So when we gather together we are not only fulfilling His feast instructions to us but foreshadowing our eventual, permanent gathering together also. The prophetic rehearsal portion of the feasts (*mo’edim*) continues to forewarn unbelievers of God’s intentions and comfort His people with promises of continued care and protection.

He said, “Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.” Daniel 8:19 NASB (compare also Daniel 11:27,29)

“Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.” Daniel 11:35 NASB

“For the vision is yet for the appointed time; it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; for it will certainly come, it will not delay.” Habakkuk 2:3 NASB

Motivation for observing the feasts or *mo’edim*. A very important factor in being able to receive any benefit from the feasts, or the whole Word for that matter, is our motivation. Without trusting obedience (faith), it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and therefore receive any benefit from what He tells us to do. Trusting means that the one we place our trust in is worthy of that trust, and can and will follow through on His Word to us. Obedience springs from that trust, because if God IS as He says He is it would follow that we should actually DO what He says to do. Do not think that we can put some tassels on our belt loops (also called *tzitzit*) or follow the feasts to the letter, then act any way we choose, and expect to please God with our practice if we don’t have faith.

In the reference below the Father reminds us that just following a few rules will not please Him. If we follow every single rule He made for a feast, but harbor iniquity in our hearts, then observing a feast is useless. Sodom and Gomorrah in the reference below are other names for people who “honor him with their lips but their hearts are far from him” (Isaiah 29:13), in this instance applying to hypocritical Isra’el.

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the instruction of our God, You people of Gomorrah. “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” Says the LORD. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle; and I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who requires of you this trampling of My courts? Bring your worthless offerings no longer; incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, they have become a burden to Me; I am weary of bearing them. So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.” Isaiah 1:10-15 NASB

Why does the Father hate the offerings, sacrifices, and appointed times (feasts)? Does this mean we are to eliminate His Words? Or is it that the practice of the feasts was corrupted with presuming on His grace, the filth of evil deeds and disobedience? See what the Lord says to us later in the same reference.

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together,” says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are

trouble to remove leaven from the home and do not even think of removing the sin from their lives, which is what the removal of leaven represents. As a matter of fact, we should concentrate on the removal of sin from our selves more than finding microscopic traces of yeast or baking soda in our home. Check out the example of King Josiah in 2 Kings 23:21-25 where he celebrated the Passover AND removed sin from the Land.

Have you ever wondered how Jesus could both eat the Passover meal and BE the Passover lamb? It is because the literal meaning of “twilight” (Ex. 12:6) is “between the two evenings.” Therefore He could eat the Passover meal on the first evening, as long as His execution took place before the second evening. By the way, He had to be in the ground three days AND three nights, so the conventional Christian teaching of a Friday execution and a Sunday resurrection is wrong, no matter how you combine the days and nights.

I want you to notice that the sacrificing of the lamb on Passover in Exodus 12 is not in connection with the Temple at all; it was done at home. Later, when Israel was in the Land, it was to be done at the “place where I put my Name” (Deut. 16:2,6). Exactly where this is at the present day can be debated still. It has been known to mean “the place where the Temple is,” but if I understand the Word properly then WE are the Temple, so what does this really mean? This is something that needs more study. Apparently, if the place where He puts His Name is too far away, we do it at home as evidenced by Deut. 12:21.

In 2 Chron. 30:17 Hezekiah prays that the Lord will not hold the sin of eating the Passover in a way other than prescribed by Temple ritual against the people, and God does not strike them. Although I wouldn’t go so far as to say we could do what we want, there appears to be some leeway. I have not actually done this yet, but I am working up to buying a lamb

I am not an expert in all the details of timing, or procedures, or comparisons to other events. And even if I were this would not be the place to discuss all the nuances. Much is in flux right now as we read the Word and try to understand what it means. All I know is what I read and what I have learned from several of my teachers. I have not done an exhaustive study although I am sure there is much to be gained from such. You can begin to put some of these things together also, as you gain understanding and familiarity with the Word. This is one of my major points in teaching: **start somewhere, and add more as you understand**. Don't hesitate to begin doing as much as you can for fear of not knowing enough. Fear doesn't have a place in our relationship with our Father except the kind that is from reverence, respect, and worship. Although stark raving terror of certain aspects of God is not an unhealthy thing to have either.

But there are questions of who may eat of the Passover (Ex. 12:42-45, 48, 49), exactly what circumcision means (Gen. 17:1-15; Rom. 4:9-12; 1Cor. 7:18; Col. 2:6-14), where to eat it (Deut. 16:2, 5 compare to Ex. 12) and where did the scriptures command an egg on the plate anyway? How do we balance Exodus 12:49 ("The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger that sojourns among you") with Exodus 12:43 ("No foreigner is to eat of it")? It is my view that as adopted sons, in the household of faith, we are free to partake of the Passover without penalty, as long as we ARE of the household of faith (1 Cor. 11:23-34). As I've said before, balancing these things will deepen your understanding, strengthen your faith, and enhance your relationship to the Father and each other.

Some people go to extremes to remove leaven from their houses. They will clean everything from top to bottom (this is where the idea of Spring cleaning comes from), and even use a feather to dust everything so there will be absolutely no particle of leaven in the dwelling. But some people take this

red like crimson, they will be like wool. If you consent and obey, you will eat the best of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken. How the faithful city has become a harlot, she who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your drink diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels and companions of thieves; everyone loves a bribe and chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, nor does the widow's plea come before them. (Isaiah 1:16-23 NASB)

Our Father is not kidding around here. The outward observance of the feasts could be perfect, and still not pleasing to God because we forget that ALL of His Word is to be observed in perfect balance without showing any partiality.

Themes in the Mo'edim. Each of the appointments has themes associated with them. The themes have become an integrated part of the celebrations, built up by association with 1. The first use of a term; 2. Meanings of words; 3. The first events; 4. The time of year; and 5. Subsequent related events happening at the same time. For instance, when the Father says that Trumpets is a "day of blowing," then sounding a trumpet (or *shofar*) in other places becomes associated with this action. Another comparison can be drawn from how the Passover Lamb is understood first to be an actual lamb and also Jesus the Lamb of God. Our Father uses these natural types of things to illustrate His spiritual realities for us (see John 3).

Another way that themes become associated with the mo'edim is through prophecy. Our Father makes and fulfills prophecy around the feasts, using the elements of the feast to inform His people about what is going to happen, helping us to persevere in times of adversity. He reminds us that He is always in control, knowing (and declaring) the end from the

beginning, and encouraging us to overcome. Through the recurring pattern of annual feasts or appointments with Him, salted throughout with various themes relating to His character and attributes, He reveals Himself to His people. He is the Center, the Rock, our Redeemer; on Him we can rely, we can trust and obey with full confidence that He doesn't fail and He will never leave nor forsake those who place that confidence unreservedly in Him.

The major themes for Passover are redemption, renewal, salvation, and freedom. A picture is given to us of the people of God being released from Egypt to worship Him through a series of plagues visited on the Egyptians. The final plague was the death of all first-born children in houses (literally) that were not protected through obedience by marking the doorframe with the blood of a lamb. Egypt is symbolic of the evil world system (or sin), the blood of the lamb was foreshadowing the Blood of Jesus the Messiah (the Lamb of God), and the meal is symbolic of the flesh of the Messiah, which Jesus also declares to be His Word in John 6. At first the appointment was for remembering Egypt and freedom, and to look forward to the Messiah. After the resurrection, the feast reminds us of Jesus' sacrifice (Luke 22:19) that saved us from the curses of sin, and we look forward to eventual permanent freedom of body, soul, and spirit in the final form of the Kingdom. In the meantime, through this appointment we celebrate our present release from captivity and rejoice in the freedom of bond service to our Father. This is part of our sanctification process, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, pressing on toward the prize of the upward calling of God in Jesus the (Philippians 3:13,14).

With all due respect (which I admit is very little) to the people who are afraid some will be "Left Behind," this may very well be a picture of our future deliverance. The plagues bear a remarkable resemblance to the plagues in the book of the

posed to be eaten in haste (Ex. 12:11), but some people have turned it into a four to six-hour ordeal through tradition and custom. Three of the seven feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles) are called "pilgrimage" feasts where everyone is supposed to go to the "place where He puts His Name" (Deut. 16:16). But according to Deut. 12:21 (cf. Deut. 14:24-26) if that place is too far away we can do them at home.

So, Passover is on the 14th - the day starts at sundown in the evening) of Nisan (more on months in a minute), and Unleavened Bread starts on the 14th, and goes for seven days. The first day is a regular Sabbath, and the 21st is also a Sabbath, in addition to the weekly Sabbaths (every time we turn around, rest). Between the two calendars, and with days starting and ending at sundown, there can be some confusion; I know I have to stop and think and I STILL get confused. I hope I have written this down correctly and I haven't confused YOU.

The **calculating of months** for Israel's calendar used to be by watching for the new moon. Every so often a month was added to the year to adjust for the drift between the cycles of the moon and the agricultural season (driven by the sun). Sometime around the beginning of the fourth millennium (just after the time of Jesus) someone calculated the cycles of the moon mathematically, and now the Jewish calendar is set up around this calculation. The only problem was, this removed God as the coordinator of the cycles, and some people are now thinking of giving Him back His place by going back to the original style of watching for the new moon. Another problem with using the lunar cycles to regulate the calendar is that the months are out of sync with the Gregorian calendar, which is based on the movements of the earth around the sun. This is why God's appointed times move around compared to the calendar mostly in use today (the Gregorian).

Messiah is not seen in the Torah then a veil is still over the eyes of the observer, whether they are Jew or Gentile.

Exodus chapter 12 has most of the Scriptural specifics for the observance of this day, but Leviticus 23 has some more detail and so does Numbers 9:1-14.

1. On the tenth of the month get a lamb (or goat) in it's first year and male, for each household, share if needed (verses 3-5).
2. Keep it for four days (till the 14th of the month), kill it at twilight (verse 6).
3. Put some of the blood on the lintel and doorposts of the house (verse 7).
4. Eat the flesh, roasted, not boiled or raw, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (verse 8).
5. Don't leave any till morning, burn the remainder.
6. Eat it in haste, dressed, with sandals on and staff at hand (verse 11)
7. It is a permanent ordinance (verses 14, 17, 24, 42).
8. Eat unleavened bread for seven days (v.18). On the first day remove all leaven from the house. Do not eat any leaven during this time (verses 15, 19, 20).
9. Passover is the first day of Unleavened Bread (evening of 14th is the same as the start of the 15th), and a Sabbath (verse 16). The seventh day is also a Sabbath. These are in addition to regular Sabbaths if on different days.
10. When children ask why, we are to tell them of the Exodus (verses 26, 27; 13:8,14-16). According to Jesus (and Paul) we are to do this in remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19; 1Cor. 10:16-21, 11:23-34).
11. Have a feast to the Lord on the seventh day of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 13:6)

One of the things that is different between Exodus 12 and Leviticus 23 (and other texts) is that we don't splash some of the blood on the doorposts and lintel. Also, the meal is sup-

Revelation, and for those who have eyes to see both processes appear to be nearly identical. What if events were to happen in an entirely different fashion than that popularized in current so-called "Christian fiction?" What a concept! I don't think they realize just how much fiction they are producing.

Themes associated with Hag HaMatzah (hahg-ha-maht-saw, Unleavened Bread) include cleansing (baptism); sanctification; purity; removing sin and Jesus as our baptism (Hebrew *mikveh*). All yeast (or leaven), which symbolizes sin is removed from the house, which teaches us about purification, sanctification, and leaving sin behind (in Egypt, as it were). In place of sin we live on the Word of God, the Bread of Life, Jesus our Messiah (the unleavened bread). There is also a baptism (symbolized by going through the Red Sea), which helps us understand cleansing and identification with YHVH. The Sea is a *mikveh* (Hebrew for literally "a gathering of waters," the place where baptisms take place) which IS Jesus. He is our baptism, our identity, our cleansing. One of these days we will experience a final cleansing and entry into the eternal reality of the Kingdom.

First Fruits (HaBikkurim hah-bic-er-eem) starts the beginning of counting the weeks until Pentecost; and includes the offering to God of the first fruits of the spring harvest. Jesus offered Himself as the first fruits of the resurrection according to Paul (I Corinthians 15:23). Those of us who belong to Him are also a sort of "first fruits" according to James 1:18.

Pentecost or Shavuot (shaw-voo-oat) gives us the themes of reception of instructions for holy living (His Word) from the "breath" (Holy Spirit) of God (man does not live by bread alone); the Akeidah (ah-kay-daw or the binding of Isaac) and the first (or left) trump of redemption. The first Pentecost in Exodus 19 and the Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 are very similar. Both have flames (or lightnings) symboliz-

ing purification, both have the Spirit of God moving (breath = wind = words), and at both the Words of God were delivered for us to live by. At the first Pentecost people died, at the one in Acts 2 people lived. The Word at the first one was delivered on stone tablets; in Acts it was written on the heart. This feast is also called the Feast of Weeks because we count about seven weeks between it and First Fruits.

The Akeidah (ah-kay-daw) is the story of the binding of Isaac, and of Abraham's obedience in offering him as a sacrifice (Genesis 22). It figures into both Pentecost and Trumpets, but it's association with Pentecost comes from the voice of God represented as a shofar (trumpet or horn) sounding louder and louder (Exodus 19:16,19), and horns are also reminders of the sin of the golden calf worship (Exodus 32, idolatry). It is a picture of the sacrifice made by the Father using His Son (Jesus) for our redemption. The ram caught by its horns (two) was the substitute, just as Jesus was the substitute for us. The first horn (left horn) symbolizes the first redemption (from Egypt) and the second horn speaks of our final redemption pictured at the feast of Trumpets (both of which were and will be engineered by Jesus).

The Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah) has a lot of themes. There is a king's coronation (who is our king, the calf or God?) perhaps best pictured in Daniel 7:9,10,13,14 (related to Revelation 4:1,2), where books are opened and judgment is made (that's why this scene is associated with this holy day), and the Son of Man is given a kingdom (dominion and glory). The meaning of the word Teruah means "awake" or "shout," and Yom Teruah literally means "Day of Awakening Blast" (or shout). So we wake up from the sleep of sin to repentance, or from spiritual lack of awareness to resurrection.

Other themes that I don't have space to talk about here are marriage; concealment, and the last (or right) trump of the

that many people refer to all three by the name Passover. The other two are the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Hag Ha'matzah, hawg-haw-mahts-ah) and First Fruits. First Fruits (HaBikkurim, pronounced haw-bic-er-eem) is an offering of the first part of the harvest. First Fruits also begins the countdown to Pentecost (Shavuot or shah-voo-oat), which is the day that the Law and the Spirit was given (a long time apart in some people's reckoning, but more about that later). Together, these four are known as the Spring festivals.

Passover is on the 14th of the month of Nisan, sometime around the Gregorian March or April (the common calendar in use today). If you get a Jewish calendar it's easier to keep track. Unleavened Bread starts on the evening of that day and goes for seven days (the first and last of which are Sabbaths), and First Fruits is on the first Sabbath after the end of Unleavened Bread. A lamb is sacrificed for Passover and a meal eaten, bread that has not "risen" (and it's not even my pun – the best puns are from God) is eaten for seven days at regular meals (as well as a "sacrifice by fire" but we don't do that anymore – although some people's cooking could fall into this category!), and a "wave offering" is made of the first part of the harvest at First Fruits. Then seven complete Sabbaths are counted (the counting of the omer) to set the time for Pentecost (also called the feast of Weeks Deut. 16:9-11).

An interesting fact to note is that Passover is pre-figured in the Garden by the clothing God made for Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21-24), and also by the ram that was the substitute for Isaac (Gen. 22:8, 13, 14). Jesus "fulfilled" this "appointed time" (boy is that a loaded term) on the execution stake when He offered Himself as the Spotless Lamb to pay the penalty for our sins. He is also The Unleavened Bread (hence the pun about "risen"), and He is also our "Wave Offering" and the First Fruits of God's Harvest. If Jesus the

Christian Faith & Practice through Passover/Unleavened Bread

“Don’t be stiff necked now, as your ancestors were. Instead, yield yourselves to Adonai, enter his sanctuary, which he has made holy forever; and serve Adonai your God; so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. For if you turn back to Adonai, your kinsmen and children will find that those who took them captive will have compassion on them, and they will come back to this land. Adonai your God is compassionate and merciful; he will not turn his face away from you if you return to him.” (2 Chron. 30:8,9 CJB)

For those of us who have decided to hear and obey and stop listening to the doctrines of men, Passover is an important occasion. And for those of us who are rookies at submitting to the whole Word, it might be a little difficult to tell exactly how we should remember this “appointed time.” This article is not intended as a lengthy discussion of the various details; rather, I just want to help get you started making more room for the Word of God in your lives.

This is probably the most complicated feast as far as Scripture references are concerned, and whole books have been written about just this subject. Most of the practices involved with modern observation of the feasts and festivals revolve around food, fellowship, teaching, and prayer. I won’t go into a detailed discussion of the legitimacy of sacrifices here, or their presence or absence. As you continue, you will learn more and more, and can refine your practice as your faith is strengthened.

There are actually three feasts associated so closely together

Akeidah. Sweetness is prominent in the food we eat; my wife Susan likes to call this the “feast of Sugar.” Scripture includes Isaiah 27:13; Isaiah 52:1 and I Corinthians 15:52. These are prophetic of resurrection, our gathering together with Him, our “wedding” with Him, and our being hidden on the Day of Wrath (Yom Kippur). Remember that God switched this month with the month of Passover. Even though many call this the “head of the year” (Rosh HaShanah), it really is in the seventh month. Also, even though now it is a two-day event (because of it’s starting right smack on the new moon), it is supposed to be only one day long.

Yom Kippur (yohm-key-poor, Day of Atonement), although solemn, has only a few but very important themes. The main theme is Atonement/Judgment. For believers there is atonement, and for those who do not have a sacrifice (Jesus the Messiah) there is only judgment. Those who do not repent before this day can only see “smoke and burning,” but believers have access to His presence through the Messiah. The shofar (trumpet) is also sounded on this day but with a different meaning. As a matter of fact it is called the shofar haGadol, “the Great Trump.” You might recognize this from a statement of Jesus in Matthew 24:31.

Sukkot (sue-coat, Feast of Tabernacles) – resurrection; rewards; rest; thanksgiving; rejoicing; celebration; also called the Season of Our Joy and the Feast of Nations. Some scriptures that are associated with this feast are Isaiah 26:17-21; Psalm 27:5; and Psalm 47:5 (ascended = coronation, shouts of joy, trumpets). This could be called God’s Camping Trip because of traveling to Jerusalem and living in tents. We live in tents during this time to remind us that Jesus dwelt with us for a while, and we will dwell with Him when He sets up His Kingdom and reigns from Jerusalem for 1,000 years. We have joy now because we are free in Him, and we will be even freer when He comes and we are with Him.

The eighth feast on our list is **Shabbat** (shah-baht, Sabbath), which has strong themes of rest and fellowship. The first Shabbat was observed by God Himself and recorded for us in Genesis 2:1-3. There seems to be something supernatural in obeying the Father's instructions on this (which is true for all of His instructions, but perhaps we "feel" it more here). Resting on this particular day has peculiar far-reaching aspects to it. It reaches deep into your soul, and unwinds you in a way that brings peace and contentment to every fiber of your being. Part of this could be from "resonating" with the Father's Spirit because of obedience. Part of it could be that we "do" what we see the Father "do," and that creates a spiritual bond with Abba (our "daddy") through which flows His presence or peace (shalom). Or part of it could be that your own physical rhythms move at the same rhythm that the Father set with an end of the week rest. Hmm. It couldn't be that He built you and knows what you need, could it? Nah, that can't be it.

Jesus in the Mo'edim. Jesus is the focus of the mo'edim, the beginning and the goal. In the mo'edim we are privileged to physically connect with our Redeemer. To worship God with all our mind, soul and strength includes anything we can physically change to honor His Word to us.

"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. "I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts—they came from you, O Zion; the reproach of exile is a burden on them." Zephaniah 3:17,18 NASB

I have already highlighted some of the ways that Jesus is found in the feasts, but here is a summary. Jesus is our Passover lamb, the unleavened bread we live on, the promise of our eventual resurrection (First Fruits). He is the one who gives us His Word to live by through the power of His Torah

and His Spirit (Shavuot or Pentecost). We blow shofars to wake people up to repent and come to Him, and He is the bridegroom that will come for His bride and also the soon to be crowned King (Trumpets). We remember the atonement He makes for us, and fast and pray that the judgment is postponed as long as possible so as many as possible will also accept His blood for payment of sins and come to Him (Yom Kippur). He lived in a human body, or tabernacled among us sharing our temptations, trials, and afflictions. We know that we also dwell in tabernacles (our bodies), and we are only here for a little while, and will eventually dwell in a place that will be so harmless we will not need houses (Sukkot or Tabernacles).

Discipleship in the mo'edim. The feasts influence our discipleship by their themes. Through Passover we declare our freedom from sin, and if there is any lingering problems we can declare freedom from those as we go. It is interesting to note that the seven days of hag haMatzot (Unleavened Bread) give us a running start to drop a bad habit, and the 49 days up to Shavuot (Pentecost) help to cement the new behavior. We are to realize that we are representatives (First Fruits) of the harvest through the Jesus the Messiah to the Father, and He brings us to Shavuot to reinforce our Father's will for holy living on earth as it is in heaven. Because we don't continue in His Word or Will, or are otherwise defiled by the world, we need to repent and be re-cleansed (Trumpets) and restored (Atonement), then after passing under the rod of discipline (Atonement) we live happily ever after in His Will (millennial kingdom and beyond). As these events are repeated each year, we practice His presence, we are reminded of His power and promises, and we are encouraged to persevere through tribulation and overcome the world.