



The Quarry Gospel Church

BIBLE STUDY - 26.05.21

BIBLE STUDY - LEVITICUS - 16.THE MANUAL OF HOLINESS - Leviticus 17-26

Part 6 - GOD'S WORD ON TIMES OF CELEBRATION - Ch.23

INTRODUCTION

Key qualities of the Christian life often thought of in relation to:

Galatians 5:2; Colossians 3:12-14; Romans 5:3-5 amongst others like faith, courage.

BUT - What about **Gratitude** and **Thankfulness**:

Old Testament - *Psalms 136:1, 100:4, 50:14 and 118:24.*

New Testament - *1 Thess.5:18; Colossians 3:15,17; Hebrews 12:28, 13:15.*

We should be a people characterised by our thankfulness - the message of *Leviticus Ch.23.*

Opening Verses:

- festivals "appointed by God" and speak of His character.
- to be an abiding gift (to be continued after the wilderness experience)
- 3 sections - v3 The Sabbath - a weekly observance - the principles of which underlay all the other feasts.
 - vv4-22 Spring celebrations.
 - vv23-43 Autumn celebrations.

1. THE SABBATH (v3) - "GOD RESTS"

- A day of rest (Heb. word means "to cease") - emphasis on what should **not** be done.
- Pattern for weekly Sabbath laid down in *Genesis 2:2-3.*
- Opportunity and reminder to Israel to remember deliverance from slavery and to realign values with God's - to rely on Him alone.
- Only command not to be restated in New Testament:
 - Possible reasons - association with Pharisees wrong attitude to the Sabbath (*Mark 2:27-28*) **OR** importance of 7th day overtaken by 8th day.

The 8th Day:

- See *Leviticus 9:1; 12:3; 14:10,23; 15:14,29; 23:23,39*
- A day of stepping out into newness;
- followed the acts of cleansing;
- Early Christians met on the 8th day to honour the Resurrection;
- It was the day when the Spirit was poured out on the believers at Pentecost;

The Principle of the Sabbath still applies today:

- **We need a day when we can cease from work;**
- **The Sabbath was about rest - it was made for us and we should use it.**

2. THE PASSOVER (vv4-5) - "GOD DELIVERS"

- 14th day of 1st month (changed their calendar originally).
- Question: Why no Passover today if it was a "lasting ordinance"?
Answer: We still celebrate a feast to remember God's deliverance - the Communion Table - Jesus instructed us to remember Him, the spotless Lamb, given to deliver us - and to be thankful.

3. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (vv6-8) - "GOD NOURISHES"

- Followed immediately after the Passover and lasted 7 days.
- Marked the start of the barley harvest.
- Every Israelite male commanded to attend the Sanctuary;
- 1st & 8th day - like a Sabbath - a sacred assembly
- 2nd-7th day - eating only unleavened bread.

In the New Testament - Yeast became a symbol of sin's corrupting influences (*1 Cor 5:6-8*)
No N.T equivalent of feast, but principles still important:

- Christians should be in haste to obey God's will and way;
- Christians are meant to be a "pilgrim" people, never "comfortable" - always moving forward.
- Christians should regularly examine their lives and throw out any corrupting influence of sin.
- Christians should feed on the truth of God - not on the junk food of the world.

4. THE OFFERING OF FIRSTFRUITS (vv9-14) - "GOD'S CLAIMS"

- An "anticipatory feast" - the Israelites were given this in the wilderness and therefore were looking forward to being able to present God with the firstfruits of their possession of the Promised Land. (*vv9 - "when..."*)
- An event - rather than a festival - no specific date - dependant on ripening of grain.
- Priest "waved" the sheaf, thus "giving" it to God.
- Great Day of Celebration - accompanied by other offerings (burnt & grain)

Firstfruits is a New Testament Principle:

- Firstfruits were a "downpayment"- a part of what was to follow;
 - An act of trusting God for what was to come.
- a) Christ is the Firstfruits of the resurrection - *1 Cor.15:20-23*.
b) We have the firstfruits of His Spirit right now - *Romans 8:22-25*
c) The believer is the firstfruits of the new creation Jesus will bring about - *James 1:17-18*.

5. THE FEAST OF WEEKS (vv15-22) - "GOD PROVIDES"

- the Offering of Firstfruits took place when the first barley was harvested;
- the Feast of Weeks came at the end of the barley harvest.. "7 weeks" were counted from the beginning of the harvest - 49 days; Feast of Weeks on **50th day** (again a Sunday).

- 2 loaves made from fresh grain and yeast (richest offering) together with 7 burnt offerings, a grain offering, a sin offering and a fellowship offering - a "mega" celebration!
- N.B. - v.22 - amidst the celebration , the poor and the foreigner were not to be forgotten (edges of the fields left from them to glean).
Today's application - you cannot divorce prosperity in business etc. from holiness and ignore the poor - harvests and holiness go together!
- Significance of 50 days:
50 days after Christ's resurrection (firstfruits), the disciples reaped a harvest of 3000 when the spirit was poured out on them as they celebrated the Feast of Weeks. (a foretelling in Leviticus 23!)

6. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (vv26-32) - "GOD FORGIVES"

(See notes on Ch.16 for detailed study)

- High point of Israelite year - the annual spiritual "spring-clean"
- A mandatory feast
- N.B. - Only for this feast do we see penalties specifically relating to disobedience of the command not to work on this day.

7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (vv33-43) - "GOD REMINDS"

- As with Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Day of Atonement - every Israelite must attend the Sanctuary.
- A 7 day festival, signifying the end of the agricultural year
- finished on "8th" day - (no work on 1st or 8th day)
- 2 specific instructions unique to this feast:
 - Palm branches etc. to be taken and they were to rejoice before the Lord for 7 days;
 - They were to live in temporary shelters - a reminder of their temporary shelters in the wilderness.
- O.T. & N.T. - show this feast later involved "water" - a reminder of Moses and the rock - also of the prophecies of Ezekiel and Zechariah - talked of the water of life that would come from the temple; It was as this feast was happening that Jesus said, (*John 7:37-39*) - *"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink..."*

So in these feasts, many New Testament events are foreshadowed.

THE COMBINED MESSAGE OF THE FEASTS IS SUMMED UP IN THE FOLLOWING HYMN:

**How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend;
His love is as great as His pow'r
And knows neither measure nor end.**

**'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit will guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past
And trust Him for all that's to come.**