

Chapter IV

THE SEVEN FEASTS OF THE JEWS

Another important prophetic overview is found in Leviticus chapter twenty-three. It begins with a statement about the observance of the Sabbath, then it proceeds to give the details and the order of the observance of seven feasts of the Jews. These feasts and their associated sacrifices were observed from the first month through the seventh month of the Jewish year.

Throughout the Old Testament, the sacrificial system was in operation to show forth by types the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. They were a portrayal of His *one sacrifice for sin forever*, whereas the seven feasts of the Jews were a prophetic overview of the first advent of our Lord, the church age, and the second advent of our Lord. It is unlikely, but not impossible, that the antitypes of the seven feasts of the Jews were understood until after our Lord's earthly ministry.

When our Lord completed His earthly ministry, it became apparent to those with spiritual discernment that the first three feasts of the Jewish year had all been fulfilled when our Lord

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presented Himself in Jerusalem on the tenth day of the month of Abib as *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*; when He was examined by the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees, the chief priests, the Sanhedrin, Herod, and Pilate, who declared, *I find no fault in this just man*; when He was crucified on the preparation of the Passover (John 19:30-31), and gave up His Spirit at the time of the evening sacrifice (the time when the passover lambs were being slain); when He was buried as the sun began to set towards the first day of Unleavened Bread (which is called Passover, the time when the passover lambs were eaten); and when He arose from the dead on the feast of Firstfruits to ... *become the firstfruits of them that slept* (I Corinthians 15:20).

When we look at the last three feasts of the Jewish year in the light of the first three feasts of the year, it becomes evident that while the first three feasts spoke of the first advent of our Lord, the last three feasts speak of His second advent.

The first of the last three feasts is the feast of Trumpets. It points to the first major prophetic event of the second advent of our Lord, the first resurrection. This is commonly known as the rapture. The rapture is the hope of every believer. It is the day when ... *the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed* (I Corinthians 15:52). *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord* (I Thessalonians 4:17).

This will be followed, at the end of the great tribulation period, with the second coming of our Lord. This is foreshadowed in the Day of Atonement. This was the day in the Jewish year when the high priest came out of the holy of holies (after having made a propitiation for the sins of Israel) to stand before the nation of Israel, to bring them salvation.

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It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:23-28)

This will be the day when Israel (as a nation) will be saved. Our Lord shall come to the mount of Olives. This was prophesied by Zechariah (14:4), and it was reiterated as our Lord ascended into heaven. The angels said, ... *this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11).

The last of the feasts to be observed is the Feast of Tabernacles. It speaks of the Kingdom age. Zechariah wrote:

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16)

There was one more feast of the Jews. It was Pentecost. It was observed between the three feasts of the first month, and the three feasts of the seventh month, fifty days after Firstfruits. Since the first three feasts of the first month were prophetic of the first advent of our Lord, and since the last three feasts of the seventh month are prophetic of the second advent of our Lord, the observance of Pentecost between these feasts suggests this feast was not about our Lord, but about that which has existed between the first and second advents of our Lord, the church age.

This is supported by the fact that on Pentecost *two wave loaves ... baken with leaven* were

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an essential part of the feast. Leaven is used in the Scriptures to speak of sin and false doctrine. This means the loaves of the feast of Pentecost could not represent our Lord, *For in Him was no sin at all*, but they could represent the church.

This can be seen in our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat, where true believers are represented by the wheat. In keeping with this, the loaves of Pentecost were baked with wheat and with leaven. Since the church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles (which is the number of the loaves); and since our Lord taught the parable of the tares among the wheat to His disciples, showing that there is leaven in the church (a false gospel in the midst of the true gospel); and since the Scriptures reveal, *if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us*, showing that despite salvation, believers retain their sin natures (this also corresponds with the leaven of the two loaves); and since the Spirit of God was given to the church on the day of Pentecost: a proper application of these truths strongly suggests Pentecost was a prophetic representation of the church age. This is corroborated by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of [the] promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly

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framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

On the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after our Lord's resurrection from the dead, our Lord sent His Holy Spirit to indwell and empower every believer who was then a part of the newly formed body of Christ (which we know as the church). Our Lord's promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit included all believers of all ages, but this promise could not be put into effect until Christ was glorified, according to John 7:37-39. Christ's church (His called-out assembly), also called His temple, could not be built until the foundation was laid; and He, according to I Corinthians 3:11, is that foundation. Then, according to I Peter 2:5, believers are the living stones with which the temple of God is being constructed. Thus Christ's called-out assembly is empowered to do the work of the Lord upon this earth until the end of this age.

When the rapture occurs, the bodies of the redeemed of all ages will be resurrected, glorified, adopted, and reunited with their souls. This glorious assembly will be transported into the presence of our Lord in heaven. At virtually the same time upon the earth (according to another prophetic overview in the life of David and his son Absalom), the antichrist will counterfeit the return of our Lord to this earth. He will then make a covenant with Israel for one week (seven years), which is the seventieth week of Daniel's vision.

After the antichrist has convinced much of the nation of Israel (with *signs and lying wonders*), as well as all of the apostate churches, that he is the Christ, the Lord will bring the one hundred and forty-four thousand to mount Zion. These Jews (twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes of Israel) will be the custodians of the truth during *the time of Jacob's trouble* (the great tribulation period).

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It cannot be proven, but it is certainly implied in Scripture, that the one hundred and forty-four thousand (in the seventh and the fourteenth chapters of the book of the Revelation) are Jews who lived in times past, died, and were resurrected with our Lord when He was resurrected. They are referred to in Scripture as *the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb* (Revelation 14:4). Our Lord is also referred to as the firstfruits. Firstfruits is plural. This implies that firstfruits includes our Lord, as well as the one hundred and forty-four thousand.

Further it makes sense that God would use faithful servants, who had not been corrupted with the idolatry of the rest of the nation of Israel in their lives upon this earth (virgins), to preach during the most difficult times the world will ever face. It makes sense that our Lord raised this company of Old Testament believers and translated them into heaven after they showed themselves alive in Jerusalem. It makes sense that our Lord will use these seasoned, trained, and faithful servants to minister to the nation of Israel during *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

Even in this age, one of the requirements for preaching is, *Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil* (I Timothy 3:6). Therefore the one hundred and forty-four thousand Jews cannot be new converts to Christ, who would, of necessity, be saved without the preaching of the Word of God (since all of the redeemed will have been resurrected prior to the appearance of the one hundred and forty-four thousand upon the earth). This would be contrary to the way the Lord has brought redemption to man throughout the Scriptures -- *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. And also:

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (I Corinthians 1:21)

In keeping with the prophetic aspect of the feasts, the six days of the work week, followed

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by a Sabbath, has also provided a prophetic view of the coming of the Kingdom of God. This is not directly stated in Scripture, but it is implied in the truth ... *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (II Peter 3:8).

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. 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. (Leviticus 23:1-3)

If we apply ... *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* to God's Sabbatic covenant with Israel, each day of the Jews' work week represented one thousand years of human history. Whether the Jews understood this or not, every work week in their lives, followed by a Sabbath, was a perpetual testimony to God's promise of the Kingdom age.

At the present time, this interpretation may not seem possible because the time, from the creation of Adam to the present, has already exceeded six thousand years. The explanation for this seeming discrepancy is locked in the mysteries of Scripture, where, without wresting the Scriptures, it still allows for a literal fulfillment of six thousand years of human history from the creation of Adam until the second coming of our Lord.

In Martin Anstey's book, *The Romance of Bible Chronology*, he established, by a very careful analysis of Old Testament Chronology, that the first year of Adam was 4042 years before our present system of dating. The present year is 2008 A.D. From Adam to the present, then, is 6050 years. This seems to be too many years for the analogy *a day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*, or is it?

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Our text states, *Six days shall work be done*. According to the book of II Chronicles, this principle was violated by the Jews to the extent they were exiled to Babylon:

And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years. (II Chronicles 36:20-21)

We have not mentioned it before, but in the twenty-third chapter of the book of Leviticus most of the feasts of the Jews were observed as Sabbaths. There were two Sabbaths associated with Unleavened Bread, none with Firstfruits, one with Pentecost, one with Trumpets, one with the Day of Atonement, and two with the Feasts of Tabernacles. This totals seven, and with the fifty-two normal Sabbaths in a year, this means there were fifty-nine Sabbaths to be observed by the Jews every year.

If we multiply the seventy years of the exile times three hundred and sixty-five and one quarter days (the number of days in a year), and divide that number by fifty-nine (the number of Sabbaths in a year), we will learn that the Jews failed to keep Sabbath for more than four hundred thirty-three and one third years (nominally, four hundred and thirty-four years).

If we reflect back to our studies of the seventy weeks of Daniel, we will note that the seventy weeks were separated into seven sevens, threescore and two sevens, and one seven, for a total of four hundred and ninety years. At this point, we must make an assumption based upon the character of the Jews. Let us assume they were faithful in observing the Sabbaths for the first seven sevens (forty-nine years) after they returned to the land. This was during the time of the rebuilding of the city and the sanctuary. Let us then assume they were as unfaithful in observing

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the Sabbaths for the sixty-two sevens (four hundred and thirty-four years) as they had been prior to their captivity.

If this were so, we have a duplication of four hundred and thirty-four years of failed Sabbath observance. If our assumption is true, another period of seventy years of captivity is needed to keep Sabbath. (Incidentally, we cannot count beyond the 434 years of the seventy weeks of Daniel because the law ended with the crucifixion of our Lord, at the end of the sixty-ninth week of Daniel's vision.)

If we add these seventy years (of rest) to six thousand years (six days) that work may be done, this will give us six thousand years of work, to correspond with six days, and seventy years of Sabbaths, to correspond with another captivity. These two figures would give us a total of 6070 years. Now if we subtract the period of the Old Testament (4042 years) from the 6070 years, we will have a presumed date of 2028 A.D. as the latest possible date for the return of the Lord. If we subtract seven years for the great tribulation period, we can see that the first resurrection is indeed imminent.

As long as we are making assumptions, if the first resurrection were to occur this year (2008 A.D.), then the return of the Lord would be seven years hence, at the end of the great tribulation, in the year 2015 A.D. Let it be understood, there is no requirement to extend the return of our Lord to the maximum period of six thousand and seventy years from Adam. The specific number of years of the presumed exile is dependent upon the number of years of the unfaithful observance of the Sabbaths, which is known only to God. Therefore no man knows the day or the hour of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we can *Look up, for our redemption*

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draweth nigh.

This solution, while conjecture, provides a plausible reason for human history (by Biblical chronology) to be greater than the six days of labor, followed by a seventh day of rest. It also provides an answer to the many prophecies of the Old Testament that speak of Israel's return unto the Lord at the end of her exile, which were not fulfilled when she returned after seventy years in Babylon.

The truths we have learned from the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, along with the other truths we learned in our earlier chapters, will aid us in our understanding of the many prophecies that we shall study throughout this book.