

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 23:1-4

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Leviticus Chapter 23, and today we will read verses 1-4.

Leviticus is the book where God speaks the most. The structure of Leviticus also reveals God's heart for mankind. After humanity's fall, God sought to restore people by revealing His complete plan of redemption. He first gave the ordinances of sacrifices and established the priestly system to help remove all impurities. Then, through the high priest entering the Holy of Holies once a year on the Day of Atonement to meet God at the mercy seat, people could understand God's will—that He desires them to be holy and set apart for Him. Because God is holy, His people must also be holy. Thus, God gave His people statutes of holiness so they could be sanctified and dedicated to Him.

Next, we come to Leviticus 23, the feasts of the Lord. This chapter is very important, because it describes how the Israelites, following God's heart, began living holy lives through the ministry of the priesthood after removing their impurities. The ultimate outcome is the feasts of the Lord, where God and man share rest together. These feasts were ordained by God and had special historical significance for the Israelites in the Old Testament.

Similarly, the spiritual meaning behind these feasts is even more vital for New Testament believers because the feasts serve as a microcosm of God's eternal plan. In His eternal will, God set a three-step plan:

1. The completion of redemption,
2. The building of the Church,
3. The manifestation of the Kingdom.

These three steps correspond to the seven feasts of the Lord. May we understand both the details of the feasts given to Israel and their application for New Testament saints, so that we may comprehend God's eternal will and fulfill His ordained plan to bring forth His Kingdom.

Verses 1-2: “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.’”

Moses told the Israelites about the feasts of the Lord, which we must recognize as God’s feasts, to honor and worship Him. These feasts are not for human revelry, indulgence, or festivity. Nearly all human celebrations, including some religious holidays, have become commercialized, materialistic, and opportunities for indulgence. Therefore, when God declares these as His feasts, we must pay attention and observe them exactly as He commands, without adding human ideas. Many human intentions begin with good motives, thinking to enhance expressions of reverence, but over time, they become distorted, even turning into disasters for the feasts.

Thus, observing feasts in accordance with God's heart means strictly following His commands without embellishment. God’s statutes are already perfect and need no additions from humanity.

At the center of the feasts is the holy convocation. The word “convocation” in the KJV and ASV means a large, formal gathering for a specific purpose. Attendees often followed prescribed dress codes and gathered at designated times. Since these are God’s feasts, the purpose is, of course, to worship Him. The people wore clean linen garments to come together and worship, making it a holy convocation and the central focus of the feast.

Nehemiah chapter 8 records that the Israelites, who returned from exile, rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls under Nehemiah's leadership. On the first day of the seventh month, as we will read later, the Feast of Trumpets was observed. The returned

Israelites gathered for the first time in the open square by the Water Gate. Ezra the scribe stood on a specially built platform and read from the Book of the Law to the people. Levites helped interpret and explain the law so the people could understand it. This led to their rejoicing, praising, and repenting with tears—this is the proper spirit of a holy convocation.

Verse 3: “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.”

In the previous verse, God announced the feasts of the Lord, but before declaring them, He first mentioned the Sabbath. Six days of work were to be followed by a seventh day of rest and a holy convocation. On this day, the people were to gather, hear God’s word, and worship Him. Regardless of where the Israelites lived, they were to observe the Sabbath.

Why did God mention the Sabbath before proclaiming the feasts? The purpose of the Sabbath was for people to enjoy rest. The Sabbath's institution is found in Genesis 2:2-3, where God rested on the seventh day after six days of creation. Humanity, created on the sixth day, began its existence by entering into the seventh day of God’s rest. Thus, God’s intention was for humanity to enjoy rest with Him. By mentioning the Sabbath before the feasts, God revealed that the purpose of the feasts, like the Sabbath, was for people to enjoy rest. We could even say that rest is the foundation of the feasts.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the New Testament, Jesus Christ Himself did not observe the Sabbath. In Mark 2:28, Jesus declared, “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” He and His disciples did not need to observe the Sabbath. Did Jesus abolish the Sabbath because He no longer wanted people to rest? Quite the opposite! In Matthew 11:28-29, Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Jesus did not want people to enjoy rest only on specific days; instead, He invited all who labor and are burdened to come to Him anytime to find rest. When we labor for ourselves and carry our burdens, we lose rest. But when we take Jesus' yoke and learn from Him, we find rest for our souls. Jesus transformed the Sabbath into a realm and state of being. Whenever we come to Him, we can enter His rest.

Verse 4: "These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times."

Verse 3 revealed that the purpose of the feasts is for people to share rest with God. This verse emphasizes that the feasts require holy convocations, again centering the feasts on gathering before God. This is where true rest is found. The seven feasts of the Lord are listed from verses 5 to 43, with verse 44 summarizing that Moses delivered the feasts of the Lord to Israel.

Today, we will first take an overview of the seven feasts of the Lord and their New Testament spiritual significance. This way, we can better understand God's eternal will and plan. Over the next few days, we will delve into the details of each feast and explore their New Testament applications and practices. From verses 9 to 43, God outlined the seven feasts over the year, divided into three groups: The first group consists of three feasts in the first month; The second group has only one feast; The third group includes three feasts in the seventh month. Let us examine these groups one by one.

The first group includes three feasts in the first month of the Jewish calendar: The Passover on the 14th day of the first month; The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasts seven days from the 15th to the 21st; The Feast of Firstfruits on the day after the Sabbath following Passover. So, in this group of feasts in the first month, there are the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits.

These three feasts collectively represent the completion of redemption in the New Testament. Jesus Christ, according to God's plan and the prophets' prophecies, fulfilled these feasts. On Passover, He became the sacrificial Lamb, crucified on the

cross. Historically, Jesus was crucified on a Friday, and the next day was the Sabbath. The day after the Sabbath, Sunday, was the Feast of Firstfruits. Jesus, according to what He had previously foretold to His disciples, would rise on the third day after being crucified. Therefore, the day of Jesus' resurrection was precisely the Feast of Firstfruits. Jesus Himself became the firstfruits of the harvest, offered as a wave offering to the Father.

Jesus Christ completed redemption so that all who believe in Him may receive forgiveness of sins and escape death. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they are born again. The redeemed saints are called to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. Seven is a number of completeness, symbolizing the entirety of one's life—a complete period. This means that every Christian is called to live a sinless life throughout their lifetime. This does not mean we will never sin; we are still human and imperfect and will inevitably sin. However, the blood of Jesus Christ has eternal power to cleanse sins. As it is written in 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." New Testament believers are especially blessed because, through the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ, we are justified by God.

The second group of feasts begins with the Feast of Firstfruits and counts 50 days, ending on the day after the seventh Sabbath, which is the 50th day—Pentecost. In the Jewish calendar, this is typically in late February or early March, coinciding with the wheat harvest. Thus, Pentecost is also called the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks.

In New Testament typology, Pentecost represents the building of the Church. After Jesus Christ resurrected on the Feast of Firstfruits, He remained with His disciples for forty days, helping them transition from experiencing His physical presence to understanding His spiritual presence. Forty days later, He ascended to heaven in their sight. Before His ascension, Jesus instructed the disciples as recorded in Acts 1:4: "And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me.'" This promise referred to the Holy Spirit. Then the disciples, 120 in total, gathered in the upper room for ten days of prayer. On the 50th day, the

day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Peter, along with the eleven apostles, stood and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who heard were cut to the heart, and about three thousand people repented and were baptized that day, leading to the establishment of the church in Jerusalem.

Later, the apostle Peter opened the door to the Gentiles by preaching the gospel at Cornelius' house. Following this, the apostle Paul undertook three missionary journeys, spreading the gospel among the Gentiles, and churches were established in Gentile regions. This fulfilled Jesus' commission to His disciples before His ascension, as recorded in Acts 1:8: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Thus, the second group of feasts, Pentecost, typifies the building of the Church in the New Testament.

So far, we have seen the first and second groups of feasts, totaling four, all in the first half of the year. The work of redemption has been completed, and the work of building the Church is ongoing. There is a four-month gap between the second and third groups of feasts, symbolizing the lengthy process of the Church's building.

The third group of feasts begins in the second half of the year, in the seventh month. On the 1st of the seventh month is the Feast of Trumpets; on the 10th, the Day of Atonement; and from the 15th to the 21st is the Feast of Tabernacles. In New Testament typology, these feasts represent the manifestation of the Kingdom. They primarily concern the nation of Israel and have not yet been fulfilled because Israel is not yet ready. However, God is already at work. In 1948, the state of Israel was miraculously restored in the land of Canaan. Sadly, most Israelites remain hardened in their hearts and do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. This situation will persist until the Church is ready and Christ returns. At that time, the trumpet will sound to gather Israel.

As Jesus Himself declared in Matthew 24:30-31: "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." On the Feast of Trumpets, angels will gather Israel.

As described in Revelation 7:4-8, 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel will be sealed and preserved during the Great Tribulation. Nations will rise against Israel, and at Israel's most desperate hour, Christ will descend from heaven onto the Mount of Olives, making a way for them. Only then will they recognize that the One they pierced, Jesus Christ, is the Messiah. The remnant of Israel will repent as a nation, accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement.

Finally, the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. Christ will reign as King, and the victorious New Testament saints will rule alongside Him, governing the nations. The repentant nation of Israel will become God's priests, leading all peoples in worship. This kingdom, characterized by righteousness and justice, will last for 1,000 years, symbolized by the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. The eighth day that follows signifies the ushering in of the new heaven and new earth.

Dear brothers and sisters, the feasts symbolize God's eternal will and plan, which are profoundly rich in meaning, and some aspects have yet to be fulfilled. We must humbly seek understanding and, through the light God gives us, may grasp His eternal purpose and plan.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for bringing us to the Feasts of the LORD, which reveal God's eternal purpose and plan. We are unworthy yet privileged to partake in Your eternal purpose. Pour out Your light abundantly upon us so we may truly understand Your plan. Grant us obedient hearts, willing to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. In this age of grace, may we preach the gospel and lead others to salvation, seeking every citizen of the Kingdom. When the Church is complete, we will be ready to welcome Your return. Bless the church I belong to, that it may be a church of mutual love and readiness for Your return. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.