

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

Leviticus 23: 5-14

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus 23: 5-14.

The LORD says in Exodus 23:14-17, "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD."

After delivering the Israelites from Egypt, God established that they were to observe three annual feasts to Him and appear before Him. The passage briefly mentions these three feasts: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering. Later, in Leviticus 23, God revealed many additional details, specifying the appointed feasts of the LORD. These seven feasts were arranged into three groups, corresponding to the requirement to appear before God three times a year. Yesterday, we provided an overview of these seven feasts and their corresponding spiritual significance in the New Testament. Today, we will delve into the first group of the three feasts.

Verse 5: "On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover."

The fourteenth day of the first month at twilight refers to the end of that day, as the Israelite's day begins in the evening. Thus, the twilight of the fourteenth day of the first month marks the LORD's Passover. This feast holds profound historical

significance for Israel, as described in Exodus 12. God sent Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Through Moses, God performed nine plagues against Pharaoh and the Egyptians, but Pharaoh's hardened heart still refused to let Israel go. The tenth and final plague was exceedingly severe: the death of all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human and animal. To be spared, the Israelites had to meticulously follow God's instructions. When the destroying angel saw the designated sign established by God, it would pass over their homes, hence the name "Passover."

In Exodus 12:1-13, God's instructions are detailed, and they can be summarized into seven key points: 1) God commanded that the month in which this event occurred, previously the seventh month, was to be changed to the first month, marking a new beginning for Israel and making it the head of the year. 2) On the 10th day of the first month, a lamb was to be chosen. 3) On the 14th day of the first month, at twilight, the lamb was to be slaughtered. 4) The blood of the lamb was to be applied to the doorposts and the lintel of the house. 5) The entire household was to remain inside, eating the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. 6) The Israelites were to eat with their belts fastened, sandals on their feet, and staff in hand, eating in haste, as they would depart immediately after. 7) When the destroying angel passed through Egypt to strike down all the firstborn, it would pass over the houses marked with blood.

God provided such detailed instructions because He had long predestined His only begotten Son to be the sacrificial Lamb for sin. The firstborn sons of Israel were spared because God had already planned to use His own Son as their substitute. Every detail in this account was fulfilled during the final week of Jesus' earthly ministry, according to God's sovereign plan, confirming that Jesus Christ is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Passover marks the beginning of the annual feasts and signifies the new life for every redeemed believer. When Moses led the Israelites through the first Passover, the destroying angel struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, both humans and livestock, except for the homes marked with the lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintels. At midnight, cries of grief filled Egypt. Even Pharaoh, overwhelmed, urgently

sent Moses and the Israelites away. Three months after leaving Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai, where they received God's laws, including the appointed feasts of the LORD.

The Passover is the first of the appointed feasts. By the following year, on the 14th day of the first month, the Israelites were instructed to observe the Passover according to its regulations. This is recorded in Numbers 9:1-14, marking the second Passover celebrated by the Israelites.

One supplementary regulation stands out as particularly meaningful and deserves special attention. Among the Israelites, there were some who had become unclean by touching a corpse, rendering them unable to participate in the Passover. They approached Aaron and Moses, seeking guidance on how to remedy their situation.

God values and delights in the willingness of His people to offer sacrifices to Him. Moses, acknowledging his limitations, did not make a decision himself but sought the LORD's guidance. God provided a provision in Numbers 9:10-11: "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the LORD's Passover. On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it.'"

This provision allowed those who had become unclean to observe the Passover one month later, on the 14th day of the second month. This truly is a message of grace and hope. After being redeemed, believers may inevitably encounter defilement that causes them to lose the qualification to partake in the Passover. Yet God grants a grace period of one month. Once the matter of uncleanness is addressed, the individual is restored to enjoy the Passover once again.

The Passover, as the beginning of the annual feasts, was designed to allow those who had been defiled to be readmitted and to join the congregation of Israel in worshiping the LORD. This principle can also serve as a guide for the New Testament Church: when believers fall into impurity, they can be graciously restored to fellowship within the church, resuming their place in communion and worship.

Verse 6: "And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread."

The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately follows the Passover. The lamb for Passover was slaughtered at twilight on the 14th day of the first month, as the day was nearing its end. That evening marked the beginning of the 15th day. From the 15th to the 21st, for seven consecutive days, they were to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread by eating unleavened bread each day.

Let us first consider Israel's historical experience. On the evening of the 14th day, after slaughtering the lamb, their dinner consisted of unleavened bread, lamb, and bitter herbs. Later that same night, which marked the start of the 15th day, the Israelites departed Egypt. Exodus 12:39 records, "And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves."

On the surface, it seems their departure was so hurried that they could not use leaven. In reality, the Israelites were obeying God's commands. In Exodus 12:15, God had already instructed the Israelites not only to eat unleavened bread but also to remove leaven from their houses.

In Scripture, leaven is consistently symbolic of sin or false teachings. Its defining characteristic is that even a small amount can permeate and affect the entire batch. If leaven enters the church, it might appear to lead to rapid growth, but it lacks substance and is filled with emptiness. Paul rebuked the church in Corinth for tolerating sin, specifically sexual immorality, without taking action. In 1 Corinthians 5:6-7, Paul admonishes them: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." Thus, immediately after the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins and lasts for seven days.

The personal experience of Passover represents the forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Lamb. When someone is saved, the experience of Passover is followed

by the observance of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This signifies the removal of the old leaven—confessing and forsaking all past sins—and symbolizes a lifetime of sanctification. The seven days of eating no leavened bread reflect a rejection of all sinful practices.

In New Testament terms, this marks the beginning of a life of sanctification, learning to live a holy life. Every believer, upon being saved, is called to embark on the journey of sanctification and to practice holy living.

From an experiential standpoint, however, it is almost impossible for a believer to completely avoid sin after receiving grace. For this reason, God gave further instructions regarding what should be done during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Verses 7-8: “On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.”

The first day, which is the fifteenth day of the first month, is to be a holy convocation, during which no customary work is to be done. This means that the day is a Sabbath, where the people are to gather together with God at the center, reading His Word and worshiping Him. Following this, for seven days, they are to offer offerings made by fire to the LORD. Although this passage does not detail the specific offerings, Numbers 28:17-25 explains that during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the daily offerings were substantial: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year as burnt offerings each day. Accompanying each burnt offering were grain offerings, and in addition, a male goat was to be offered daily as a sin offering.

Here, we see that the key to living a sinless life lies in offerings—especially abundant burnt offerings and grain offerings. Burnt offerings represent our complete dedication to God, while grain offerings signify our earnest effort to live

a virtuous life. However, even as we strive to live a holy life, we will inevitably commit sins unintentionally. Therefore, daily sin offerings are necessary to address our innate sinful nature. For seven days, offerings by fire are to be made to the LORD, and on the seventh day, another holy convocation is to be held, with no work done—again observing a Sabbath. From a spiritual application, after being saved by grace, we are to rest in God's presence on the first day and participate in collective worship with the saints in the church—a holy convocation. Then, throughout our lives, we are to offer daily burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sin offerings to God. On the seventh day, representing the end of life, we will again rest in God's presence and conclude our journey in the collective worship of the saints.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the picture of a perfect life. Within this first set of feasts, there is another significant celebration: the Feast of Firstfruits. Since Moses and the Israelites were still in the wilderness and unable to plant crops, God gave a preview of the time when they would enter the Promised Land and begin observing the Feast of Firstfruits. This feast is particularly important for New Testament believers, as it marks the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Verses 9-11: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.’”

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land of Canaan, given by God, and began to cultivate crops, the first month of the Jewish calendar marked the barley harvest. At harvest time, they were to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of their crops and present it to the priest. The priest would then wave the sheaf before the LORD on the day after the Sabbath, as a wave offering, so that the people would be accepted by God. The day after the Sabbath is the Feast of Firstfruits.

In New Testament typology, this points to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. During His earthly ministry, Jesus understood that His time for glorification had come, and He declared, as written in John 12:24, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." Jesus is the grain of wheat, who fell into the ground and died on Passover. On the third day, He rose again and bore much fruit.

Historically, Jesus Christ was crucified on a Friday. After His death, He descended into Hades, but death could not hold Him. On the third day, the day after the Sabbath, Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead. According to Matthew 27:52-53, some Old Testament saints were resurrected with Christ, came out of their graves, and appeared to many. Jesus, along with these resurrected saints, became a sheaf of grain offered as a wave offering to God, symbolizing resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15 is the chapter that explains resurrection most thoroughly. Let us read a few verses: 15:17, "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." 15:20, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." 15:23, "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."

From these verses, we see that Christ is the firstfruits, opening the way for resurrection. Jesus Christ Himself is the model of resurrection. For believers, Christ is the firstfruits, and one day, we too will be resurrected like Him. James 1:18 says, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Here we see that because of resurrection, Christ has become our firstfruits. One day, we will also be resurrected like Christ and become the firstfruits of all creation. The Feast of Firstfruits is a commemoration of resurrection.

Verse 12: "And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD."

The Feast of Firstfruits occurs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Each day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, significant burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sin offerings are presented. However, on the day of Firstfruits, in addition to the offerings for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a year-old male lamb without blemish must be offered as a burnt offering to the LORD. This lamb typifies Jesus Christ. However, it does not represent the sin-bearing lamb, as that was already offered on Passover. This lamb is a burnt offering, wholly consumed on the altar as a sweet aroma ascending to the throne of God.

The term "burnt offering" signifies "that which ascends," reflecting that the risen Christ must ascend to the Father's throne to bring complete satisfaction to God. In John 20:17, on the morning of His resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, who stood weeping outside the tomb because of her deep love for Him. Jesus said to her, as recorded in John 20:17, "Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" Here, we see that after His resurrection, Jesus had to ascend to the Father before He could return to spend 40 days with His disciples. Jesus' resurrection had to be accepted by God, like the lamb offered as a burnt offering, ascending as a pleasing aroma to the throne of the Father, signifying that Jesus had perfectly fulfilled the Father's will and completed the plan of redemption to His satisfaction.

Verse 13: "Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin."

Along with the burnt offering, a grain offering and a drink offering are also presented. The grain offering consists of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, burned on the altar with the burnt offering as a sweet-smelling sacrifice that pleases God. This symbolizes the pure, tender humanity of Jesus Christ, which was wholly approved by God. The drink offering, made of one-fourth of a hin of wine, is poured out on the altar, intensifying the fire and making the offering even

more complete. The drink offering represents Christ pouring Himself out entirely, holding nothing back. Together, the grain offering and drink offering enhance the burnt offering, rising as a sweet aroma to satisfy and delight God.

Verse 14: "You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

Each year, at the first harvest in the Promised Land, the Israelites were to present a sheaf of the firstfruits at the Feast of Firstfruits as a wave offering. Before this offering, they were not permitted to eat bread, parched grain, or fresh grain from the harvest. The firstfruits had to be presented to God first, allowing Him to enjoy the harvest before they could partake in it themselves. This teaches the Israelites to put God first in their lives. The labor and toil invested in sowing and harvesting must first be offered to God as an act of worship before they could enjoy the fruit of their work.

In New Testament typology, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, became the firstfruits. He ascended to the throne of the Father, was accepted by God, and then returned to spend time with His disciples. In John 20:20, on the evening of the day of Firstfruits, Jesus appeared to His disciples and showed them the nail marks in His hands and the wound in His side, confirming that He had ascended to the Father and returned to be with them. This ordinance is to be observed throughout all generations as an eternal statute in all dwellings.

Dear brothers and sisters, the first three feasts in the set of God's festivals have already been fulfilled, and we have received the blessings of redemption through them. We should, therefore, strive to live holy and sinless lives according to God's will.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, we are so grateful. Thank You for accomplishing everything on our behalf. You are our Passover Lamb, shedding Your precious blood for the forgiveness of our sins. You are our Firstfruits, and through

the power of Your resurrection, we have been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. You are also our Feast of Unleavened Bread, leading us through the Holy Spirit to live a sinless life and walk the path of sanctification. You have also shown us that the key to living a sinless life is to daily offer burnt offerings, grain offerings, and sin offerings in abundance. Help us to live a Christ-centered life and promptly deal with any sin we commit. Keep us in Your presence daily, living a holy life. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.