

# THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

Leviticus 23:1-44

Foreshadowing God's plan of the ages from the past eternity to the future eternity

by

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## CHAPTER TWO

“MOSES . . . WROTE OF ME” (John 5:46)

We can better understand the typical significance of the feasts of the Lord if we first get a glimpse of the context and setting of the record, according to the Scriptures.

We have already seen that God's commandments concerning them are found in one chapter, right in the very heart of the books of Moses. But that is not enough; we want to find out something of the whole message of these five books, of which this one chapter is but a part.

In Genesis we are impressed with the repeated failure of man, as God gives him trial after trial. Beginning with the ease, comfort, and blessing of the Garden of Eden, picturing God in fellowship and communion with man, this first book of the Bible closes with words that speak of death—**“in a coffin in Egypt.”**

Cain, who knew all the background of his parents' sin, and the consequences thereof, became a murderer!

In the days before the flood; **“God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Genesis 6:5).

Noah, who saw the awful judgment of God upon a corrupt world, afterwards failed to govern himself. (See Genesis 9:20-23).

In direct defiance of God, wicked men built the tower of Babel, bringing confusion and division among men.

Abraham, though **“the friend of God,”** yet disobeyed Him by going down to Egypt, the very place where God had told him not to go.

What a record! What a tragedy! Failure—sin—death! This is the message of Genesis, together with the promise of a Redeemer. And it may be summed up in these words: **“Ye must be born again.”**

Then follows Exodus; the book of redemption.

It opens with Israel in bondage in Egypt, under the lash of the taskmaster. And it takes us on to see the deliverance of God's people on the night of the first passover, deliverance from the bondage of Pharaoh's tyranny and deliverance from the waters of judgment as the nation walked through the Red Sea on dry ground.

All this is but a picture of the deliverance of the sinner from the bondage of Satan by faith in the shed blood of the Paschal Lamb, even Jesus, “**the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**” (John 1:29).

But in Exodus there is yet more—there is the record of the building of the Jewish tabernacle, in order that a holy God might come down and dwell among His people during their wilderness journey from Egypt to Canaan.

Exodus closes with the tabernacle erected and the cloud of glory covering this “**tent of the congregation.**” This was the Shekinah Glory, a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, the presence of God “**in the midst**” of His redeemed people. Thus we see that Exodus is the book of redemption, and shows how sinful man may have fellowship restored with a holy God.

Before the record of the wilderness journey is resumed in the book of Numbers, we find in Leviticus the words of the Lord, given to Moses as He “**spake unto him out of the tabernacle**” (Leviticus 1:1).

And God called unto Moses from the tabernacle, because it was His great desire to have His people in there with Him. He gave to them words of instruction concerning the worship of a wilderness people. As we have seen, the whole of Leviticus is but the record of the word of the Lord, spoken to Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai. Herein God tells a redeemed people how they may worship Him—on the ground of sacrifice. Therefore, Leviticus opens with the five offerings, all of which set forth the person and work of Christ.

The burnt offering and the meal offering typify His personal perfections and glories; the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering set forth His redemptive work.

We cannot go fully into the typical significance of these five offerings in this study; but in order that we may better understand the feasts of the Lord, let us pause just here for a brief glance at the meaning of the offerings; for fellowship with God in partaking of His “**feasts**” was based upon a right relationship with Him by faith in the redemptive work of Christ, the promised Messiah.

In the burnt offering and in the meat [meal] offering there was no leaven; for leaven, in the Word of God, is always a type of sin; and these two offerings represent the perfections and excellencies of the person of Christ, in whom there is no sin. Therefore, they went up as “**a sweet savour**” unto God.

“**The whole burnt offering**” was offered on the altar; none of it was to be eaten by the priests; and never was the Son more precious to the Father than when He offered Himself “**without spot or blemish**” as the whole burnt offering, on behalf of the guilty sinner.

The meal offering speaks to us of the perfect humanity of Christ. The “**fine flour**,” with no unevenness, no coarseness, reminds us that in Him was no sin; while the “**oil**” in Scripture is always a type of the Holy Spirit. At the Incarnation and at the baptism of our Lord we see, as it were, the “**fine flour . . . mingled with oil**.” The sinless Son of Man was born of the Holy Spirit and baptized with the Holy Spirit. All through His earthly ministry He worked in the power of the Holy Spirit; and He was raised from the dead by “**the spirit of holiness**” (Romans 1:4).

The peace offering, the sin offering and the trespass offering, represent the work of Christ on behalf of man, and deal with every phase of sin. Therefore, they are called the “**non-sweet savour**” offerings. Making “**peace**” for us “**through the blood of his cross**” (Colossians 1:20), becoming “**sin for us, who knew no sin**” (II Corinthians 5 :21), and dealing with sin in its working against God— these are the three phases of Christ's redemptive work for us, as typified by the three non-sweet savour offerings.

As the book of Exodus closes, we see Moses and all Israel shut out of the tabernacle where God dwells in the midst of His people. Then as Leviticus opens, God calls “**unto Moses**” and shows him how worship and fellowship with Him may be restored —on the basis of the offerings, which pointed on to Christ.

With worship made possible by faith in the promised Redeemer, God goes on to invite Moses and his people to sit at His table and share with Him His “**feasts**.” That upon which He delights His soul is none other than the person and work of His Son, our Saviour, the Bread of Life and the Living Water to the hungry, thirsty soul.

Later on in the history of Israel, as they rejected their Messiah, the Holy Spirit ceased to call these “**holy convocations**” the “**feasts of the Lord**”; He called them, in the Gospels, the “**feasts of the Jews**.” They lose their real meaning unless the Lord Jesus is the object of worship and delight. But with Him as the Bread of Heaven, they are the “**feasts of the Lord**.” And to us today, as to Israel in the wilderness, God is saying, “***Come, and enjoy this feast with Me.***”

Numbers takes up the story of the journey from Egypt to Canaan, a type of the believer's pilgrimage from the Christ-rejecting world to the Promised Land, even heaven itself.

Israel met with temptations and trials and testings on this journey; likewise, the Christian in this world is on the enemy's territory. We need not be surprised, therefore, when the trials come. But the goal, ever before us, enables us to say with Paul: “**I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us**” (Romans 8:18).

Deuteronomy finds God's people at the very entrance to the land of promise, at the end of their long, weary journey. And one day we, too, shall reach the end of our earthly pilgrimage.

**As we shall then look back over all the way the Lord has led us, we shall thank Him for deliverance from bondage to Satan and sin; we shall thank Him for fellowship restored; and we shall thank Him even for the trials and testings that brought us closer to His guiding hand.**

This is the message of the books of Moses; and this is the setting in which we find His own words concerning His feasts. As we examine the record, we see why the Lord Jesus, **“beginning at Moses,”** expounded unto the two disciples on the way to Emmaus **“the things concerning himself.”**

We see why He said to the Pharisees, **“Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me”** (John 5:46).

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—these are the books of Moses; and they tell the story of sin, redemption, worship, pilgrimage journey, and Promised Land in sight. These things were **“a shadow of good things to come”**; and they are fulfilled in the person and work of the eternal Son of God.

**“THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME”** (Psalm 23:5)

It is in this setting that we find the instructions regarding the feasts of the Lord. It is here that we find a holy God inviting His redeemed people to share with Him the things which delight His heart.

The wisest of men once wrote, saying, **“He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love”** (Song of Solomon 2:4). The Psalmist also said, **“Thou preparest a table before me.”**

The Lord Jesus is the Bread of God. At His baptism and again at His transfiguration the Father's voice spoke from heaven, saying, **“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”**

The feasts which delight the heart of the Father are those feasts which proclaim the glories and the excellencies of the **“beloved Son.”**

Is He the Bread of Life to you, my friend? **“O taste and see that the Lord is good”** (Psalm 34:8). The Father invites you to share with Him His delight in the One **“altogether lovely.”** Is He the object of your affections? Is He the One whom you delight to please? Then for you the feasts of the Lord hold mines of wealth untold!

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