

CELEBRATING JESUS IN THE BIBLICAL FEASTS

Discovering Their Significance
to You as a Christian

DR. RICHARD BOOKER

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PREFACE

In the Hebrew Scriptures, God provided a written record of pictures of the Messiah to enable the Jewish people to recognize Him when He appeared. Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be this Messiah and proved it by fulfilling in Himself the very Scriptures and pictures that pointed to the Messiah. Yet, even though many Jews believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the powerful Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, the establishment, rejected Him for themselves and the nation of Israel.

Ironically, the Gentiles embraced Jesus. As the apostle John wrote, “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:11-12).

These Gentile followers of Jesus experienced a spiritual new birth and became part of a company of people who would be called Christians. These non-Jewish believers did not replace the Jewish people in God’s plan of redemption. Instead, they were in-grafted to the Jewish people and became part of the commonwealth of Israel, with Abraham as their spiritual father.

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THE GREAT DIVIDE

As the Christian Church (called-out ones) became more “Gentilized,” Jews and Christians began to go their separate ways. It wasn’t long before the Church (the organized Christian religion) was flooded with unbelievers who embraced the Christian faith but never received Jesus personally as their Lord and Savior. Their hearts did not change. These people brought their hatred of Jews with them into this new Christian faith.

About the same time, some of the early Church fathers (Gentiles not connected to their biblical Hebraic roots) developed a faulty theology that created an anti-Semitic mentality in the Church. This further divided the Christian world from the Jews. These early anti-Jewish declarations laid the foundation for the tragic future of Jewish-Christian relations that would see the Church lose sight of its Jewish roots and persecute the Jews down through the centuries.

GOD IS DOING A NEW THING

But in these last days, God is doing a marvelous thing. He is breaking down the walls of hatred and misunderstanding that have divided the Jews and Christians. God is calling the Jewish people to return to their ancient homeland and to their covenant God. He is preparing them for the coming of the Messiah. At the same time, God is stirring in the hearts of Christians a holy love for the Jewish people and awakening them to the biblical Hebraic-Jewish roots of their Christian faith.

Many Christians are realizing that the origin of our faith is Jerusalem, not Athens, Rome, Geneva, Wittenberg, Aldersgate, Azusa

Street, Springfield, Nashville, Tulsa, etc. As a result, Christians around the world are reaching out to the Jewish people in their communities, singing songs from the Hebrew Scriptures, rediscovering their Jewish roots, and celebrating the Sabbath and the Feasts of the Lord as fulfilled in Jesus. It is clearly God's appointed time to reconcile Jews and Christians in preparation for the coming of Messiah.

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Because of the prophetic season in which we are living, millions of Christians around the world are realizing that it is proper, good, and pleasing to the Lord to celebrate Jesus in the Feasts. There are a number of benefits Christians are experiencing by doing this. Some of these are:

1. A better understanding of the Bible
2. A rediscovery of the Jewish roots of Christianity
3. A fuller comprehension of God's plan of redemption
4. A renewed passion for Jesus
5. Greater insights into God's prophetic seasons
6. Clearer and more powerful teachings through visual aids
7. A discovery of the biblical Church calendar
8. A love for the Jewish people and understanding of the role of Israel in Bible prophecy and current events
9. Spiritual growth and bonding among family members

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What believer would not want these benefits? You can realize them in your own life and congregations by celebrating the Feasts of the Lord as they find their fulfillment in Jesus. This is not something Christians have to do but something we get to do as a way of identifying with Jesus our Jewish Lord. It is a blessing, not a burden. It is an act of love, not legalism.

When Christians celebrate Jesus in the Feasts, they are not “putting themselves under the Law” or trying to be Jews. They are simply expressing their desire to return to the biblical roots of the faith. These desires come from the Spirit of God who birthed them in the heart of the believer. Responding to these desires is wholly a matter of God’s grace and not in any way a matter of legalism. Christians who are discovering the biblical Hebraic roots and want to celebrate them should not glory in the pictures but in the person of Jesus.

Paul said, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning...” (Rom. 15:4). By celebrating Jesus in the Feasts, we can learn more fully what Jesus has done for us and how to walk with Him in our everyday lives.

I am able to say this from my own personal experiences. In 1974, the Lord awakened me spiritually to an awareness that the Hebrew Bible, what we Christians call the Old Testament, was a picture of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Believe it or not, the Lord showed this to me in the book of Leviticus. God’s Word leaped off the pages of the Bible and spiritually exploded in my heart. It was alive with His very life and power inside me. I experienced an immediate, dramatic, lasting change in my life, and I have not been the same from that moment on.

With this revelation burning in my heart, I began to see that the Bible was more than just a collection of unrelated stories. There was a master theme that told one central story through its pages. This cen-

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tral story was that God had taken the initiative to enter into a blood covenant with us through Jesus. God enabled me to see this story in every book of the Bible. The Bible was no longer a dusty old book. It was the living Word of the living God, and it was alive in me. I wrote about this in my book, *The Miracle of the Scarlet Thread*.

When the Lord showed me Jesus in Leviticus, He opened my spiritual eyes to see how Jesus was pictured in the biblical Feasts of the Lord. This incredible revelation has been one of the greatest blessings of my life. My discovery of Jesus in the Feasts has helped me understand the Bible and God's plan of redemption; it has helped me know how to walk with God; it has renewed my passion for Jesus and the many other benefits I just mentioned. The Lord so overwhelmed me with His presence and this insight that I had to share it with others. I left my career at that time and have devoted my life to telling everyone what the Lord had showed me.

I began immediately to teach on the blood covenant and the Feasts of the Lord as pictures of Jesus. It was in the early 1980s that I wrote my book on *Jesus in the Feasts of Israel*. Since that time, the book has had many printings and touched the lives of thousands of readers. Now that more Christians are discovering these wonderful truths for themselves, it seemed like a good thing to release an updated version of this book with the present title. I am grateful to my friends at Destiny Image Publishers for sharing this vision to bring this important work to a new generation of readers.

As you read this book, I pray this powerful blessing into your life from Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace."

INTRODUCTION

PICTURES OF A PERSON

I'm sure you have heard the expression, "A picture is worth a thousand words." What do we mean by this? Simply that we can more clearly communicate our thoughts and concepts with the use of visual aids than we can with words alone.

For example, if you want to teach a child the alphabet, you don't begin by giving the child a lecture on the theory of language. The child would not be able to understand what you are talking about. Instead, you give the child a block with a letter carved on it. The block is a visual aid to teach the child how to recognize a particular letter of the alphabet.

As the child learns, you give him or her more blocks with other letters until eventually the child has one block for each letter of the alphabet. Soon the child is able to put these blocks together in correct sequence as they correspond to the alphabet and make up single words.

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The child has now learned the ABCs. The blocks are visual aids used as object lessons to teach the child the alphabet.

In today's world, parents also use computers in place of these physical blocks. But the principle is the same—only now the blocks are electronic. The child learns to point to the picture of the letter on the computer. A computer tutorial communicates to the child if he or she gave the right answer.

GOD'S VISUAL AIDS

In the Bible, God often used visual aids as object lessons to teach us spiritual truths that He wanted us to understand. God used these visual aids as pictures in much the same manner that we would use the blocks to teach our children the alphabet. God has done this because in our fallen, sinful condition, it is difficult for us to understand spiritual truths. We perceive things through our physical senses much more clearly than we do through our spiritual senses.

In view of this, when God began to teach His covenant people, the Jews, He did so through the use of visual aids or pictures that the Jews could comprehend with their physical senses. God gave these pictures in the Hebrew Bible in the form of the various religious laws and rituals that the Jews were to observe. (I will be using the term *Hebrew Bible* rather than *Old Testament* throughout this book.) As the Jews practiced these laws and rituals, they would learn spiritual truths concerning their relationship with God through their physical senses.

For 1,500 years, the Jewish people learned about the one true God through their visual aids. Their religious laws and rituals taught them how to know God and walk with Him on a daily basis. They also pointed them to the Messiah. But just as the child's blocks are not the

real alphabet, neither were these physical pictures complete in themselves. They were important, but they were only pictures.

THE ULTIMATE VISUAL AID

After centuries of looking at the pictures, the time came when the Jews were to enter into the spiritual reality of these visual aids. The transition from the physical to the spiritual was provided for them through Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish Messiah and Savior of the world. While the Hebrew Scriptures provided the pictures, the New Testament provided the person. In other words, the pictures in the Hebrew Bible pointed to the person in the New Testament.

This picture-to-person connection is what Jesus was referring to in Matthew 5:17-18 when He said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

Because the common western understanding of *fulfill* means “done away with,” Christians have believed that Jesus meant the pictures pointing to Him were no longer needed. This is not what Jesus meant. We have to understand His words in the context of His Jewish culture and customs.

To Jewish Bible teachers and rabbis in the time of Jesus, the word that is translated into English as *fulfilled* meant the true or correct interpretation of Scripture, while the word *destroy* meant to give a false or incorrect interpretation. These words were used in a technical sense by the Jewish religious leaders when arguing over the correct meaning of Scriptures.¹

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In New Testament times, Jewish Bible teachers and rabbis, like Christian Bible teachers and ministers today, often studied the Scriptures together. As they discussed a certain Scripture, each would give his opinion of what he thought the Scripture meant.

One might say, “I believe this Scripture means such-and-such.” Inevitably someone in the study group would disagree. He would then say, “No, that is not correct. You are not correctly interpreting this Scripture. You are doing away with or destroying the Scripture.” Then another in the group would say, “No, he is fulfilling the Scripture. He is giving the true meaning of the Scripture.”

When Jesus used the words *fulfill* and *destroy*, He was speaking in terms that were used by the religious leaders of His time. They understood exactly what He meant. He was telling them that He did not come to do away with or destroy (lead them astray by false teachings) the Hebrew Scriptures. Instead, He fulfilled them as the person to whom the pictures were pointing. He was the human embodiment of their true meaning and spiritual reality.

A *jot* is the Hebrew character called the *yod* and is the smallest of the Hebrew alphabet. The *tittle* is a tiny mark used to distinguish certain Hebrew letters. By making such a reference, Jesus is showing how He honored and fulfilled even the least of all that was written of Him in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Unfortunately, we Christians living in the western world are the ones who have unwittingly destroyed (incorrectly understood) God’s pictures. We have done this by interpreting the words of Jesus through western eyes rather than understanding Jesus as a Jewish Bible teacher of His times. We have done this with good intentions, but the result has been a great loss of the pictures that point us to the person. But now we are living in the most exciting time of spiritual history, when

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God is awakening Christians around the world to the importance of understanding the Scriptures in their cultural context and the spiritual pictures of our Lord.

I want to share a remarkable story that relates to the importance of understanding Jesus in His Jewish context. This is true story about a young Jewish boy named Issur Danielovitch.

Issur was the son of a Russian Jew. He grew up in a harsh childhood of poverty in New York where he was often tormented by the neighborhood “Christian” bully. As an adult, Issur was a secular Jew who found success, fame, and wealth beyond his wildest dreams. God was definitely not a part of his life.

On February 13, 1991, Issur was in a helicopter crash in which two people died, yet he miraculously survived. As he contemplated why he survived, Issur began his personal search for the meaning of life, his own relationship with God, and his identity as a Jew.

As part of his search, Issur read the New Testament, which is a forbidden book to Jews. He explains, “So how did my road back begin? Here’s a shocker—with Jesus. Then I found out that Jesus was a Jew! Wow! Then I found out that Jesus was not only a Jew, but a rabbi who gave sermons on the Torah. Do Christians know that? Some things that Jesus said made more sense in the context of Judaism than Christianity. Of all the things I read of him, the one that influenced me most was this speech of Jesus recorded by the gospel writer of Matthew.”²² Issur then quotes Matthew 5:17-19.

Issur Danielovitch’s real name is Kirk Douglas. Yes, Kirk Douglas, one of the most famous movie stars in the history of Hollywood, found his Jewish identity when he realized that Jesus is a Jewish rabbi teaching the Torah. While Kirk did not acknowledge Jesus as Messiah,

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he did return to his Jewish roots and found a new spirituality and purpose for his life.

When we as Christians discover Jesus in His Jewish context, we too will find a new spirituality through the Torah pictures that point to Him as Messiah. The pictures are powerful visuals of the person and redemptive work of Jesus.

Jesus' name in Hebrew is *Yeshua*. *Christ* comes from the Greek word *christos* and means the same as the Hebrew word for Messiah, which is *mashiach*.³ To help us keep Jesus in His Jewish context and properly connected to His pictures, I have put *Yeshua the Messiah* in brackets when our English Bible uses the name *Jesus Christ*.

Humans need pictures to help us understand the world around us. The visual aids God gave to the Jewish people were spiritual pictures pointing them to Messiah Jesus. Jesus was God's ultimate visual aid. He was the perfect revelation of the spiritual meaning of the pictures. Jesus said to one of His followers, "...He who has seen Me has seen the Father..." (John 14:9).

Now that the person has come, there is no need to seek God through religious rituals. In fact, God never gave the pictures as objects of affection. Their purpose was to point the people to the person. That is what the apostle Paul meant when he said, "For Christ [Messiah] is the end [goal] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4). The words translated into English as "the end" do not mean no longer needed or useful. They mean "the goal."⁴ Jesus is the goal of the pictures that were pointing to Him.

This does not mean, however, that the pictures are no longer valuable to us. They still are important in helping us to understand how to know God and walk with Him through a personal relationship with

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Jesus. Simply put, we can know the person better by studying the pictures.

Focusing on the pictures rather than the person is religion. Focusing on the person is relationship. We have a relationship with the person, but the pictures help us better know the person.

I have been married for over 40 years to the same wonderful woman. I have pictures of her throughout the house. When she walks into the room, I do not turn down her picture as if I no longer needed it because she is in the room. I look at her picture when she is not with me because I love her and want to see her face.

In a similar way, just because Jesus has come into the room of our heart does not mean we no longer need the spiritual pictures pointing us to Him. We need them, not for salvation, but as visual reminders of who He is and what He has done for us. They help keep us focused on the person and provide us with powerful pictures of our Lord, whom we do not yet see face to face.

Christians can certainly relate to the importance of spiritual pictures. For example, water baptism and communion are two powerful visual aids that point us to the person and work of Jesus. We outwardly express our relationship to Jesus through these rituals. The ritual pictures don't save us, but they are significant in keeping us focused on our relationship to our Lord while reminding us what He has done for us. We would never think about doing away with the pictures or that we no longer need them.

THE FEASTS OF THE LORD

Some of the clearest visual aids that God gives in the Bible are the biblical holy days. For centuries, Christians were told that these spiritual

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pictures were “Jewish Feasts” that Jesus fulfilled (did away with). We have just learned that this is a misinterpretation of what Jesus meant. As we will see, the Bible refers to these religious holy days as the “Feasts of the Lord,” not the “Feasts of the Jews.”

Most Christians are truly surprised and amazed when they learn that God made reference to His special holy days in the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis. It was the fourth day of creation where we read, “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years’” (Gen. 1:14).

The Hebrew word translated into English as “seasons” is *moed*. This word means a fixed, appointed time or season or place when God would meet with His people. It specifically refers to God’s appointed biblical holy days. They are His holy festivals or feast days when the people would have a holy encounter with the Living God.⁵

Moed is the same word used to refer to the Feasts of the Lord in the Book of Leviticus. God established these special celebrations when He brought the Hebrews out of Egypt. God 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....These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times’” (Lev. 23:2,4)

When we hear the word *feast* we think of an elaborate meal or banquet. We tend to associate the word with food. After teaching and writing on this subject for over thirty years, I am still flabbergasted when Christians tell me they thought these biblical holy days had something to do with Jews and eating.

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Notice that God said these are His feasts. God's covenant name in the Bible is YHWH (Yahweh). These are the Feasts of YHWH. They were special holy convocations or assemblies established by God when the Jewish people would come together to meet with God in a special way. We might think of them as religious gatherings.

The Hebrew word for a "holy convocation" or "sacred assembly" is *mikrah*. This word means a "dress rehearsal."⁶ The Jews would act out through the festivals a dress rehearsal for the purpose of revealing the Messiah and learning the overall redemptive and prophetic plan of God. In other words, for 1,500 years, the Jews performed the drama of redemption as a picture pointing them to the person of Messiah Jesus.

God appointed three feast seasons with seven individual feasts and scheduled them on the Hebrew calendar in such a way that the Jews would have to travel to Jerusalem three times a year to keep them. (See Exodus 23:14-17 and Deuteronomy 16:16.)

These three feast seasons were known as Passover (Pesach), Pentecost (Shavuot), and Tabernacles (Succot). They portrayed and represented three major encounters with God in the lives of His covenant people. These encounters with God were for the purpose of providing His divine peace, power, and rest in their lives. Taken together, they represent seven steps in the believer's walk with God.

The Feast of Passover was the first of these feast seasons. Its purpose was to teach the Hebrews how to find God's peace. Passover included the Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits.

The next feast season was Pentecost. This was a single feast, and it taught the Hebrews how to receive God's power.

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The third feast season was called Tabernacles. The purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles was to teach the people how to enter God's rest. It included the Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles.

The Feasts of the Lord were very important visual aids for the Jewish people. Each of the seven feasts pointed them to their Messiah, and each uniquely portrayed a particular aspect of His life and ministry. Taken as a whole, they form a complete picture of the person and work of the Messiah and the steps one must take to walk in the peace, power, and rest of God. Christians have a revelation in their hearts from God's Spirit that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus not only celebrated these festivals Himself, but every major redemptive event in His life also happened on a feast day. Wow! Now since Jesus celebrated these festivals and was the spiritual reality of all of them, doesn't it seem important to learn how these pictures pointed to Him and what they can mean for us? And since these are the Feasts of the Lord, wouldn't it be good for all of God's covenant people to celebrate Jesus through these exciting pictures? And since we all need God's peace, power, and rest, wouldn't it be beneficial for believers to understand how the pictures can help us internalize the redemptive work of Jesus in our lives?

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

Our world today is no different from the world of the Bible in that we all are still seeking peace. Nations are frantically seeking peace to avoid a nuclear holocaust. Israel is trying in vain to live in peace with her neighbors. Individuals are seeking peace within themselves, peace with God, and peace in their relationships. We will never have peace until we submit our lives to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The

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Feast of Passover teaches us how to have peace with God through a personal relationship with Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

Everyone who has this personal relationship with Jesus has peace with God. But unfortunately, not all followers of Jesus have the peace of God. Many believers are overcome by fear, worry, and anxiety. Through the Feast of Passover, season of Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits, we not only learn how to have peace with God but also the peace of God.

We not only need God's peace; we also need God's power. The Bible and human experience tell us that mankind is hopelessly enslaved to self-destructive habits. No matter how many New Year's resolutions we make, it seems we just are not able to keep them. Sin has a hold on us, and only God can set us free!

Psalm 62:11 says that "power belongs to God." God has made His power available to us through Messiah Jesus. Yet, not every believer is walking in the power of Jesus. Many are still overcome by sin, satan, and the fear of death. The Feast of Pentecost teaches us how to receive the power of God and appropriate it in our everyday lives.

We not only need God's peace and power; we also need God's rest. Our brief journey on this earth is but a fleeting moment in which we constantly war against the attacks of the world on our soul. Things don't always turn out the way we hope they will. Life is full of disappointments, heartaches, burdens, and trials. Even believers sometimes grow weary in serving God and coping with the trials and struggles of life. Many are just plain worn out. The Feast of Tabernacles teaches us how to find God's rest for our souls in this life.

The quest for peace, power, and rest for our souls is surely the most elusive and difficult challenge we all face as imperfect humans living in

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an imperfect world. Yet, God has provided the means for us to live victoriously through the good and bad of life's experiences. I wrote this book to help you learn how to encounter the Living God in such a way that you will walk in His divine peace, power, and rest.

A LOOK AT WHAT'S AHEAD

You'll begin in Chapter 1 with an overview of the biblical Jewish calendar. You might well ask, "What in the world does the Jewish calendar have to do with my having God's peace, God's power, and God's rest for my soul?" The answer is simply that God established His appointed feasts, His *moed*, on the Jewish calendar to be celebrated at a certain time and in a certain sequence.

The reason God did this was that Jesus the Messiah was to fulfill them (embody their true spiritual purpose and meaning) in His own life and ministry on the exact dates that the Jews had been celebrating them for 1,500 years. Jesus fulfilled the first two feast seasons (Passover and Pentecost) at His first coming. He will fulfill the third feast season (Tabernacles) at His second coming. This means there is a tremendous amount of prophetic significance in the Jewish calendar. The time and sequence of these feasts reveal the overall prophetic plan of God.

As a believer, it is most important to understand the Jewish calendar for the purpose of learning how to apply the spiritual truths pictured in the feasts to your personal life. As stated, they are pictures of Jesus that teach us how to know Him and walk with Him.

Then in the chapters that follow, we'll study each feast in detail. We'll look back into the Hebrew Scriptures and see exactly what God told the Jews to do and how they celebrated each feast. Then we will look into the New Testament and discover how Jesus fulfilled the feast. After making

this connection, you'll learn how to apply what Jesus accomplished for your own life. Finally, you will see how God has been restoring the spiritual realities of these feasts through the history of the Church.

In addition, there is a personal study review at the end of each chapter to assist you in highlighting and reinforcing what you learned. You can complete the personal study review on an individual or group basis.

Psalm 89:15 says, "Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance." The phrase "joyful sound" refers to the sounding of the shofar to call people to understand and enter into the spiritual realities of the feasts.

Father in Heaven, bless the person reading this book with a divine impartation to hear the joyful sound of Your peace, Your power, and Your rest. Amen!

PERSONAL STUDY REVIEW

1. Why did God use visual aids in the Hebrew Bible?
2. What did Jesus say about His relationship to the Hebrew Bible and the Torah?
3. Explain the meaning of the following Hebrew words:
 - A. *Moed*
 - B. *Mikrah*
4. What are the Feasts of the Lord?
5. Name the three feasts seasons.
6. Name the seven feasts in their order of observance.

ENDNOTES

1. See www.thepresence.net/index.asp?pagename=fulfilled.
2. Kirk Douglas, *Climbing the Mountain* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 118–124.
3. See www.studylight.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=5547;
www.studylight.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=04899.
4. See www.answers.com/topic/telos.
5. See www.studylight.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=04150.
6. See www.emetministries.com/TimeTravelandTrumpets.htm.

Chapter 1



THE BIBLICAL JEWISH CALENDAR

The standardized calendar used by the world today is known as the Gregorian calendar. This calendar gets its name from Pope Gregory XIII who established it in 1582. This is a sun or “solar” calendar due to the fact that it operates on the principle of the earth revolving around the sun. The different seasons we enjoy are caused by the changing position of the earth as it makes its course around the sun.

As we know, the days on this calendar begin at midnight and last for 24 hours. It takes approximately $365\frac{1}{4}$ days for the earth to make a complete circle around the sun. This is how we determine the length of the year on the Gregorian calendar. However, some adjustment must be made for the extra quarter of a day. This is why we add an extra day every four years to make a leap year of 366 days.

The biblical, or Jewish, calendar is a moon or “lunar” calendar based on the movement of the moon around the earth. The days on this calendar begin at sundown (approximately 6:00 P.M.) and also last

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for 24 hours. It takes approximately $29\frac{1}{2}$ days for the moon to make a complete circle around the earth. Twelve of these lunar months add up to about $35\frac{1}{4}$ days in a lunar year.

The difference in the calendars means that the solar year is $11\frac{1}{4}$ days longer than the lunar year. This difference requires the Jewish people to make adjustments to their calendar, or else, after a few years, they would be celebrating their feast days in the wrong season of the year.

As we have noted in the previous chapter, God set fixed times and seasons when the Jews were to keep their feasts (see Leviticus 23:4). For example, He told them to celebrate the Feast of Passover during the spring time of the year (see Exodus 12:1-11 and Ezekiel 45:21). If the Jews did not periodically adjust their calendar, they would miss spring by an additional $11\frac{1}{4}$ days each year. After five years they would be celebrating Passover $56\frac{1}{4}$ days late and completely out of season.

To compensate for this yearly difference of $11\frac{1}{4}$ days, the Jewish calendar also has a leap year. Instead of adding an extra day every fourth year as on the Gregorian calendar, they add an extra month at the end of every third year. This inter-calendar month is $29\frac{1}{2}$ days long and makes up most of the difference between the two calendars. This adjustment enables the Jewish people to keep their feast days in the seasons called for by God.

Let's now take a look at the Jewish calendar for the purpose of getting a basic understanding of how it is organized. A copy of the calendar is provided at the end of this chapter. You will need to refer to it for this discussion.

THE SACRED CALENDAR

Notice that the Jews had two concurrent calendar years. One was a sacred calendar which God established when He brought them out of Egypt. We learn in Exodus 12:2 that God told them their deliverance from Egypt was to be the beginning of the sacred calendar and that *Nisan* would be the first month of the year on this calendar. This month was originally called *Abib* but later was changed to *Nisan* during the Babylonian captivity. You can see from the calendar that *Nisan* corresponds to the months of March and April on the Gregorian calendar. Each month on the lunar calendar may come in one or two Gregorian months because of the $11\frac{1}{4}$ days difference between the two calendars.

THE CIVIL CALENDAR

The other calendar year was the civil calendar based on the Jews' agricultural season. The civil calendar begins with the month of *Tishri*, which corresponds to the months of September and October. This is the beginning of the agricultural season.

Notice that the civil calendar and agricultural season began with the early rains that softened the ground for plowing that was done in October and November. This was followed by the sowing of the wheat and barley seed in November and December. The winter rains came in December and January to keep the ground moist. This was followed by the blossoming of the almond trees in January and February, and the citrus harvest in February and March.

The spring or latter rains fell in March and April, concurrent with the beginning of the barley harvest. The dry season was from April-

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May to September-October. The barley harvest lasted through the spring months and was followed by the wheat harvest in May-June. The grape harvest came next during the months of June-July. July and August was the time of the olive harvest. The season ended with the harvest of dates and figs in August-September.

THE FEASTS SEASONS

Notice that Passover was the first feast celebrated and represented the first of the three major encounters with God in the lives of His covenant people. For this reason, the sacred calendar begins with Passover in the month of *Nisan* (March-April). This was celebrated during the barley harvest. These feast seasons were visual aids showing the Jewish people how to know God and walk with Him. And as we have said, they were pictures of the Messiah. The spiritual truths symbolized by the feasts are available to all who encounter God through a personal relationship with Jesus the Messiah.

As Christian believers, the very first encounter we have with God through Jesus brings us forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with our Creator-God. The result is that we have peace with God as well as the peace of God. For this reason, the Feast of Passover is the first feast celebrated on the sacred biblical Jewish calendar.

The Feast of Pentecost was celebrated next because it represented the second major encounter with God, which is His power. We all need the power of God working in our lives. Once we have peace with God through our personal relationship with Jesus, we can experience His power. For this reason, the Feast of Pentecost was the second feast celebrated on the sacred calendar. It came at the time of the wheat harvest in the month of *Sivan* (May-June).

The Biblical Jewish Calendar

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated last, at the end of the agricultural season and the beginning of the new one. This was during the lunar month of *Tishri* (September-October). God placed it in this position on the sacred calendar because it represented His third and last encounter in the lives of His people. This final encounter with God represents that place in our walk with God where we find His divine rest for our soul. God's peace comes first, then God's power, then God's rest.

A study of the sacred calendar is certainly not important in itself. Our knowledge of it is for the purpose of understanding God's plan of redemption and salvation for mankind through the person and work of Jesus. As we study the feasts in the following chapters, we will see

Jewish Calendar				
Sacred	Civil	Name of Months	Farm Season	Feast
1	7	Nisan-Mar-Apr	Barley Harvest	Passover
2	8	Iyyar-Apr-May	Barley Harvest	
3	9	Sivan-May-Jun	Wheat Harvest	Pentecost
4	10	Tammuz-Jun-Jul	Grape Harvest	
5	11	Ab-Jul-Aug	Olive Harvest	
6	12	Elul-Aug-Sept	Dates-Figs Harvest	
7	1	Tishri-Sept-Oct	Early Rains	Tabernacles
8	2	Heshvan-Oct-Nov	Plowing	
9	3	Kislev-Nov-Dec	Wheat-Barley Sowing	
10	4	Tebeth-Dec-Jan	Winter Rains	
11	5	Shebat-Jan-Feb	Almond Bloom	
12	6	Adar-Feb-Mar	Citrus Harvest (Latter Rains)	
13	—	Adar Sheni	Intercalary Month	

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very clearly that God does have a plan for redeeming all who will come to Him through Messiah Jesus.

Through our study of the feasts, we will learn that God's plan for working out His redemption has a definite beginning, a definite process, and a definite conclusion. This relates not only to the person and work of Jesus our Lord and Savior, but also to our lives as believers. They are pictures that teach us how to walk with God and how God works through history to redeem mankind as revealed in His prophetic seasons.

PERSONAL STUDY REVIEW

1. Explain the difference between the biblical Jewish calendar and the standardized calendar used by the world.
2. Name the two concurrent calendar years used by the Jews.
3. List the three feast seasons in the order in which they were celebrated.