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PREFACE

A TIMELESS, TRANSFORMATIVE EXPLORATION

Welcome to *Jesus in the Biblical Holidays: Illuminating God's Appointed Times in the Old Testament Feasts*. This book marks a new chapter in my exploration of the biblical holidays, distinct from my earlier work, *A Family Guide to the Biblical Holidays*, written in 1999 for homeschool families (known as the big purple book). With twenty-five years of additional wisdom and insight, I delve deeper into these ancient celebrations, offering fresh perspectives.

This book is not a revision. This journey is not about revisiting well-trodden paths with a fresh coat of paint. It's about venturing into uncharted territories, guided by the lamp of scripture, to reveal insights previously concealed. By connecting the Old Testament feasts with the life and mission of Jesus, we uncover a tapestry of prophecy and fulfillment, a continuous thread that weaves through the fabric of biblical history, illuminating the role of Jesus as the cornerstone of our faith.

A Journey of Renewed Understanding

Embark on a journey of transformation. This book invites you to see the Old Testament festivals anew as they highlight the path to a deeper understanding of Jesus. Each page is designed to enrich your faith and bring the sacred stories to life. It's an enlightening experience that bridges ancient traditions with modern faith, revealing Christ's continuous presence through history.

The practice of observing biblical holidays serves as a potent tool for spiritual education and personal growth. These holidays were bestowed upon us by God with the intention of imparting important information. Consider, for instance, the significance of Thanksgiving in understanding the Pilgrims' story. If we were to neglect the annual observance of Thanksgiving, our knowledge of this historical event and its cultural importance would be greatly diminished.

In much the same way, the biblical holidays are designed to enhance our comprehension and strengthen our connection to the principles and narratives of our faith. God granted us these holidays as a means of instructing us through active, tangible ceremonies. These celebrations transcend mere acts of remembrance or

rituals; they immerse us in profound experiences that actively engage us with the core values of our faith.

Whether you're a seasoned believer, new to the faith, or intrigued by ancient traditions, this book is a gateway to the biblical feasts and their relevance to Jesus. Each chapter is thoughtfully structured around a distinct theme, unraveling the spiritual symbolism of these holidays and their connection to the journey of Jesus.

Practical Insights

Every chapter concludes with practical insights, transforming complex theological ideas into memorable and actionable takeaways. These are not just to be read but lived, offering new ways to integrate these biblical holidays into your spiritual life today. The book adds to your experience with holiday readings and traditional recipes, helping you dive into the heart of each celebration.

This approach is straightforward yet rich, engaging and accessible, guiding you through the Christ-centered meanings of the Old Testament holidays. More than an academic read, it's a relatable and enlightening journey for those eager to discover Christ's narrative hidden in these ancient celebrations.

Free Charts

The print version of this book features charts that may not display optimally on Kindle devices. To access these charts in a printable PDF format, please visit jesusinthebiblicaltholidays.com or join our Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/bibleholidays

Join Our Enlightening Journey

We invite you to uncover the dazzling beauty of the biblical holidays. This exploration promises to enrich your faith and family life in ways you've never imagined.



REVIEWS FOR JESUS IN THE BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS

Blown Away

I was blown away by Robin Sampson's new book, *Jesus in the Biblical Holidays*. What I assumed would be an update of her 2001 "Big Purple Book" (as many of us called it), is actually a complete overhaul. The result is the most comprehensive, historical, practical resource about the biblical holidays ever written.

God focused, Christ centered and honoring the biblical, historical and traditional Jewish context of these holidays, this book approaches each holiday from a variety of angles, including practical tips for celebration and recipes.

If you are looking for information about the biblical holidays—whether you are just starting out or have been on the journey for a while—you will not be disappointed!—Hope Egan, Author of *What the Bible Says about Healthy Living Cookbook* and *Holy Cow! Does God Really Care About What We Eat?*

Outstanding

I just want you to know, Robin, that *Jesus in the Biblical Holidays* is outstanding! I have been following you for many years now, and your prolific writing and artistic expression are amazing. I have learned so much from you, and thank God for putting you in my path! God bless you!—Vanessa joy

Beautifully Written

Jesus in the Biblical Holidays is a very informative. I learned so much I didn't know or understand. And the recipes were a wonderful bonus, knowing how the food was made added to it. Robin did a beautifully written and well thought out. Definitely a great read.—Michele Clark

A Fuller Revelation of Jesus

I was delighted to receive a pre-release copy of this book to read and give an unbiased review. I jumped at the chance as I am very familiar with Robin Sampson's previous work, some of which I used when homeschooling my boys, and it was a huge help.

I was not disappointed. With her usual style, she has produced an inspiring and informative guide to the Biblical Holidays, which would be equally useful to those who know much about these feasts and how they came about and those who know nothing. It is both easy to read and full of insight.

There are several ways that the book can be used. It can simply be read through and will give the reader a better understanding and appreciation of the biblical holidays. It could be read in sections as each biblical holiday arises. The book can also be used as a starting point for a deeper study because of the information Robin gives on each holiday. She also provides questions to reflect on and a list of resources on the subject.

I would recommend this book for anyone who wants to grasp a fuller revelation of Jesus, not just on an academic level, but in a much more holistic way, which can be made even more decadent by taking part in some or all of the activities provided in this charming book. I know it's a book I will come back to again and again.—Angela Marchington

Remarkable Journey

Jesus in the Biblical Holidays: Illuminating God's Appointed Times in the Old Testament Feasts is a remarkable journey through the Old Testament feasts and holidays while relating them to Jesus in the New Testament. This book covers it all, from the origins of the names of these celebrations to the details and even recipes that can be used for current celebrations. There are tips for deeper study and thought-provoking questions that are excellent for further reflection or group study.

Robin Sampson shares her wealth of knowledge in an easy-to-follow outline and then expounds the details in a highly understandable, easy-to-read format, including scripture references.

This book has strongly heightened my understanding of the importance and relatability of the Old Testament holidays to my life with Jesus. I have a much deeper appreciation as I read these accounts now. I strongly encourage every Bible lover to read *Jesus in the Biblical Holidays: Illuminating God's Appointed Times in the Old Testament Feasts*.—Trish Clark

Honors Jesus

This book thoroughly explains Hebrew and English terminology, symbols,

themes, and the Biblical significance of God's Appointed Times. The author describes how the holiday is observed in the traditional Jewish community but also enriches the faith walk of New Testament believers as they are invited to join in the celebrations in ways that honor Jesus. This book features:

- Appealing graphics that effectively illustrate themes.
- Following each holiday section are study questions called “Illuminating Reflections,” which encourage readers to consider further how elements of God's Feast Days relate to us personally.
- Additional devotional readings which are appropriate for each holiday. I especially appreciate the numbered Bible references in the section about Counting the Omer, in which it is traditional to count the 50 days leading up to Shavuot (also called the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost).
- Engaging activities that would be fun for families or faith communities and provide a more immersive experience for learning about God's calendar are suggested.
- Many appealing recipes are provided for each Feast day. I will sample some of these because they look tasty.
- An extensive bibliography of trusted and interesting authors is given to guide your additional research.

I was familiar with the Biblical Feast Days before reading Mrs. Sampson's book, but I was curious about any new insights she might share. I learned something interesting about the Ten Commandments there was a reference that the Commandments might have been inscribed on blue sapphire stone tablets. I will have to research that further.

Mrs. Sampson's book is a well-organized lifestyle guide to the Biblical holidays you would want to add to your home or congregational library for future reference as these special days approach during each year of God's holy calendar.
—Fran Kuik

Share Your Thoughts with Us!

If this book has enriched your spiritual journey or offered new insights, please consider sharing your experience with a review on Amazon. Your feedback supports our mission to share God's word and helps others discover this resource. Whether it's a personal reflection or how the book influenced your faith, your review is greatly appreciated. Thank you for contributing to our community and making a difference with your voice.



UNEARTHING SPIRITUAL TREASURES

MY BIBLICAL HOLIDAYS JOURNEY

Four decades ago, I embarked on a remarkable journey into the heart of the biblical holidays. What began as a fascination with ancient practices soon became a profound adventure, revealing spiritual and historical narratives far richer than I had ever imagined.

This book chronicles that journey, tracing the path from familiar traditions to enlightening discoveries. I invite you to join me in uncovering the beauty and significance of these time-honored celebrations, transforming them from mere dates on the calendar into profound moments of connection with God.

Challenges: Resistance and Skepticism

Initially, I was surprised by the hostility that my journey elicited from others. As I delved deeper into these sacred matters, skepticism and resistance emerged. My passion for God's Word seemed to spark defensiveness and anger in some, leading me to navigate their doubts and my own confusion.

In conversations with critics, I consistently emphasized that salvation is through Christ alone and not through any religious practice. This belief aligns with the understanding that exploring the Old Testament enhances our grasp of the New Testament, which was written in a Jewish context. In my pursuit of open and respectful dialogue, I aimed for mutual comprehension rather than engaging in debate. As I faced personal hurdles and skepticism, my journey gained a significance that extended beyond my own experiences. It illuminated the deep and intricate connection between the faith traditions and their Jewish origins, enriching my spiritual understanding and revealing the rich tapestry of history and tradition that underpins these beliefs.

Embracing Our Roots

Understanding the Jewish context of the Bible's holidays highlighted how Jesus'

teachings and actions were deeply embedded in these traditions. This realization opens the door to a broader understanding of Christianity, inviting us to appreciate the deep historical and spiritual bonds that link it to its Jewish origins (Romans 9–11).

As Paul affirms, the story of the Messiah grafts Gentiles as wild olive shoots onto the cultivated olive tree of Israeli heritage. The spiritual destiny of Christians is thus intertwined with that of Jews. Appreciating these common roots fosters fellowship across faith lines. Through deepening our understanding of this shared wellspring, we gain a more profound grasp of God's grand narrative of redemption coming to fruition in the Messiah. The rich fabric of history, tradition and theology that binds our faiths together is illuminated.

I discovered how the early church's distancing from its Jewish roots led to a disconnect between the New Testament and its foundational Hebraic context in the Old Testament. There is an unbroken continuity in the historical narrative from Genesis to Revelation, presenting a compelling case that views Christianity not as a separate entity but as a branch grafted onto the rich Jewish olive tree.

God put in me a passion to share how the Bible is one unified story that reveals the continuous thread of redemption intricately woven within its original Jewish context. The realization that the roots of Christianity extend deeply into Jewish soil has profoundly impacted my approach to biblical study and sharing. It has allowed me to appreciate the seamless continuity between the covenants, seeing them not as disjointed elements but as integral parts of a divine tapestry that God has been weaving since the beginning of time. The holidays, with their messages of hope, and restoration, set the stage for the coming Messiah—a promise intricately linked to the Jewish expectation of a Redeemer.

In the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the apostles, this expectation is fulfilled, and the redemption narrative reaches its climax. However, this fulfillment is not the replacement of the old with the new but rather the blossoming of the ancient promises into their full glory. Understanding this, the Christian gospel can be seen as the continuation and fulfillment of the Jewish scriptures, a realization that brings a richer, more nuanced understanding of faith.

This Jewish context provides a robust framework for interpreting the New Testament's teachings, parables, and the very life of Jesus Himself. It sheds light on the cultural, religious, and historical backdrop against which Jesus ministered and the early church grew. Recognizing Christianity's Judaic roots enriches our understanding of Jesus' teachings, allowing us to see them in the light of Jewish tradition and thought.

This realization is especially relevant in an era marked by the alarming persistence of anti-Semitism and a global tendency to overlook Israel and the Jewish people's historical and spiritual significance. As the world risks distancing itself from its Judeo-Christian heritage, I aim to be a voice calling for balanced reawakening of these roots.

A Love-Driven Exploration









Inspired by Edith Schaeffer's statement, "Christianity Is Jewish," and guided by St. Augustine's insight, "The New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New," my journey became more than an academic pursuit. It evolved into a love-driven exploration to align more closely with God's will, recognizing that Christianity is a continuation, not a replacement, of Jewish traditions.

Embracing this view has not only deepened my faith but also expanded my approach to teaching and sharing the Bible. It compels me to approach Scripture with a reverence for its Jewish heritage, encouraging others to explore the Bible's depth through this lens. This approach fosters a greater appreciation for the complexity and beauty of God's redemptive plan, inviting believers to explore the rich tapestry of history, prophecy, and fulfillment that binds the Old and New Testaments into one unified story of divine love and salvation.

Embarking on a Path to Illumination

Join me in *Jesus in the Biblical Holidays: Illuminating God's Appointed Times in the Old Testament Feasts*, an adventure that unveils the hidden treasures of God's Word. This book is an invitation to revitalize your understanding and appreciation of God's grand narrative. Let this journey of spiritual discovery guide you to a richer, more profound connection with our Father.



| HOLIDAY | PURPOSE | MESSIANIC SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|--|--|
| Passover (Pesach) Nisan 14  | During the first Passover, the Israelites marked their doorposts with lamb's blood as a sign for the angel of death to pass over their homes, sparing their firstborn in Egypt. This lamb was brought home four days prior to its sacrifice for a period of inspection. | Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, was crucified for our transgressions. Precisely when the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed on Nisan 15, Jesus met the same fate. Similarly, during the four days before death, He was scrutinized by religious authorities and deemed faultless. |
|  Unleavened Bread (Chag HaMatzot) Nisan 15 | God commanded Jews to eat unleavened bread, matzah, for seven days, removing leaven, which symbolizes sin, to commemorate purity and recall deliverance from Egyptian bondage. | Jesus, the sinless "Bread of Life," was born in Bethlehem—Hebrew for "house of bread." Like matzah, which is striped and pierced, so was Christ. His burial coincided with this Feast, linking His sacrifice to the symbolism of matzah. |
|  Feast of Firstfruits (Bikkurim) Nisan 17 | The first of the barley harvest was offered to God by the priest, who waved it to acknowledge that the land and its yield were divine gifts to the Hebrews. This act served as a sacred reminder that the bounty of their fields was a blessing from the God. | Jesus is the Firstfruits of resurrection, heralding a harvest of souls (1 Cor 15:20-23). Just as a wheat grain must die to yield a rich crop (Jn 12:23-24, 32), so did Jesus' rising on Firstfruits symbolize the promise of new life for believers. |
|  Feasts of Weeks (Shavuot or Pentecost) 50 Days after Firstfruits | Fifty days post-Firstfruits, Shavuot commemorates the Torah's revelation to Moses at Sinai, featuring two leavened bread offerings to God and recalling Jewish enslavement in Egypt (Dt 16:9-17). On this day, three thousand were killed. | Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus' followers, birthing the Christian Church. It marks the empowerment to speak various languages, symbolizing Christianity's spread and the Spirit's gifts to believers. |
|  Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashannah) Tishri 1  | Rosh Hashannah, the Jewish New Year in Tishri, ushers in the High Holy Days, celebrating the world's Creation. It features trumpet blasts, symbolizing the coronation of God as King. | The trumpet's sound may symbolize the church's rapture, gathering believers (1 Thes 4:16-18; Rev 19), and judging the wicked. Alternatively, it could represent Jesus' second coming, heralding His reign as Earth's King. |
| Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) Tishri 10  | The holiest Jewish day, involves fasting, prayer, and confession for divine forgiveness. Annually, the high priest would enter the holy of holies, offering sacrifices, including two goats, to atone for the nation's sins. | This day mirrors Christ's role as our High Priest, who entered heaven's Holy of Holies, offering His blood for our atonement. His ultimate sacrifice ensures our full forgiveness and redemption, symbolizing a time for personal repentance and recommitment to God. |
|  Feast of Tabernacles Tishri 15 | God told the people they should live in booths for seven days so that the generations would know that His people lived in booths when He brought them out of Egypt. Each Sukkoth, the Jews build and dwell or eat in booths or temporary dwellings for seven days. A joyful celebration! | Christ is our tabernacle or dwelling place (Jn 14:14). May represent the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. Many believe Jesus was born during this Feast because He was born in the late fall in a "booth." Or this is possibly when we tabernacle (dwell) with God in heaven. |

GOD'S TIMELESS TREASURES

APPOINTED TIMES

In Leviticus 23, God sets apart specific feast days as sacred, holy convocations for the Israelites to meet with Him. He commands they cease work and gather to worship at these designated times. These festivals, ordained by God for spiritual renewal, involve consecrated observances like sacrifices, offerings, and celebrations to commemorate His past deliverance while also foreshadowing the ultimate redemption through the coming Messiah.

The Hebrew Word Moed

The Hebrew word “moed” is significant in biblical and Jewish contexts, carrying the meaning of appointed times, festivals, or meetings. Derived from the root “yad,” which means “to appoint,” the term is often used in the Torah to refer to specific times that God has designated for worship, celebration, and remembrance.

Meaning and Implications

- **Divine Appointment:** “Moed” signifies a time that God has specifically set aside for meeting with His people. These times are sacred, distinct from ordinary days, and are meant for worship, reflection, and community.
- **Cyclical Nature:** The moedim underscore the cyclical nature of the Jewish year, with each festival recurring annually. This cyclical aspect highlights the enduring relationship between God and His people, commemorating historical events and the agricultural calendar of the Land of Israel.
- **Remembrance and Anticipation:** While many of the moedim commemorate historical events (such as the Exodus from Egypt during Passover), they also have a forward-looking aspect. For example, the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) celebrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and anticipates future harvests.

- **Community and Identity:** Observing the moedim is a communal activity that strengthens the bonds among the Jewish people. It also serves as a key component of Jewish identity, linking individuals and communities to their history and the land.
- **Usage in the Bible:** It appears over 200 times in the Old Testament in relation to the appointed times and festivals of Israel.
- **Moedim:** The Moedim (plural of moed) usually refers to the 7 major biblical feasts/festivals revealed to Israel in Leviticus 23.

Holy Set Apart Days

The Hebrew word *qadosh* that Moses used in Leviticus for “holy” conveys the meaning of being “set apart and distinguished, that which is unlike the ordinary.” When God declared something holy, it marked it as unique and designated it for divine purpose. For example, God sanctified the Sabbath day by setting apart that time exclusively for the Israelites to rest and commune with Him (Exodus 16:23). He ordained the priests as holy by consecrating them to perform sacred duties, ministering in His presence (Lev. 21:7-8), including wearing unique holy garments forbidden for everyday wear (Exodus 28:2). Offerings brought as tithes were made holy, rendered sacred for the service of the Lord (Lev. 27:30).

The Leviticus Holidays are Not Jewish

The Scripture from Leviticus 23:2,4 emphasizes that the feasts mentioned are not merely Jewish feasts but are described as “*The feasts of the Lord.*”

*Speak to the children of Israel and say,
“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.”
Leviticus 23:2,4*

This distinction is crucial. The passage begins with the directive, Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, which indicates that while the immediate audience is the Israelites, the ownership and initiation of these feasts belong to the LORD. They are His feasts.

This framing suggests that these holy convocations are Divine in origin and purpose. God established them for the Israelites to observe, but their significance transcends a specific ethnic or cultural identity. Instead, they are meant to be a time for all believers to acknowledge and celebrate the works and character of God.

These feasts serve as a reminder of His sovereignty, a celebration of His provision and deliverance, and an opportunity for believers to come together in worship

and remembrance. By calling them “My feasts,” God asserts His lordship over these times and invites His people, irrespective of their ethnic background, to participate in these moments of holy assembly, reflection, and celebration.

Jesus, the Disciples, and Paul Observed the Holidays

Jesus was a Jew; He could trace his ancestry in the Davidic line, extending from Abraham (Matthew 1:1–16). He lived during the era of the Second Temple, diligently followed the Law of Moses, observed the holy days, contributed to the Temple, and instructed His disciples to uphold every aspect of the Torah meticulously.

The Gospels tell us about His worship on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16), His teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37–39), and His powerful sermon at the Temple during Hanukkah (John 10:22–30). This shows the continuity of these holy days in Messiah’s life and ministry.

The apostle Paul and his disciples continued to observe these biblical holidays, including the Sabbath, after Jesus’s resurrection. Though an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul kept a solid connection to his Jewish roots. He regularly spoke in the synagogue every Sabbath (Acts 18:4) and maintained Jewish customs, as seen in Acts 21. He even encouraged the Corinthians to celebrate Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7–8), showing the ongoing relevance of these holidays for believers in Christ. These festivals are meaningful shadows of God’s truth, something to be explored positively, not dismissed as mere legalism.

Paul uses the metaphor of a shadow to describe these religious practices. A shadow is an image or outline of something lacking substance or reality. In this context, he is saying that the Old Testament rituals and observances, such as festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths were like shadows or previews of something greater that was to come.

Paul emphasizes that these practices’ true essence or reality is found in Christ. In other words, these Old Testament practices pointed forward to Jesus Christ and the spiritual realities that He fulfilled. Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17), and believers find the fullness of their faith in Him.

The Early Church

The early church was called *derekh*, meaning “the way.” Jesus’ declaration, “I am the *Derekh* (Way),” as noted in Acts 24:14, defined the identity of his early followers, including Jews and Gentiles, as the people of the *Derekh*—people of the Way.

The early Christian church was initially comprised mainly of Jewish believers due to historical, theological, and cultural factors. Jesus and His earliest disciples were Jewish, and Christianity emerged as a movement within Judaism.

The early church focused on Jews who saw Jesus as the messianic fulfillment.

Jewish customs persisted as Gentiles showed interest, diversifying the church. Paul played a pivotal role in disseminating Christianity among Gentiles, signifying a notable transformation. This transition marked a turning point as the early church, with a solid Jewish foundation, evolved into a diverse community.

The observance of feasts among Gentile believers likely blended cultural context and respect for Jewish heritage:

- **Sabbath Observance:** The extension of Sabbath observance to foreigners (non-Jews) within Israelite communities, as outlined in Exodus 20:8–11, 23:12, and Deuteronomy 5:12–15, provided a precedent for Gentile believers. While the Sabbath held spiritual significance, it also served as a day of rest and reflection, fostering a sense of unity among believers, both Jewish and Gentile.
- **Passover Participation:** Passover, one of the most significant feasts, allowed foreigners to participate, with certain conditions, as seen in Exodus 12:48–49. Gentile believers would likely have joined in the Passover celebrations, acknowledging the importance of this feast in commemorating God's deliverance from Egypt.
- **Feast of Weeks and Feast of Tabernacles:** Deuteronomy 16:11 and 16:14 highlight the inclusion of foreigners in the celebrations of the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. Gentile believers, being part of the early Christian community, would have likely participated in these feasts alongside their Jewish counterparts.
- **Cultural Context and Unity:** Gentile participation in feasts, while not doctrinal, reflected cultural respect, unity with Jewish believers, and acknowledgment of a shared faith heritage.

The Council of Jerusalem

The Council of Jerusalem is a pivotal moment in early Christian history. The Council, detailed in Acts 15, marks a significant turning point regarding Gentile inclusion and the practice of Jewish traditions within the early church. It embodies the negotiation between two major groups: traditionalist Jewish Christians and proponents of Gentile inclusion.

Traditionalist Jewish Christians valued adherence to the Mosaic Law, including circumcision and Jewish customs, as integral to their faith. They saw these practices as vital for maintaining their heritage and relationship with God, advocating for Gentile converts to adopt these customs fully.

In Acts 15 Paul, Barnabas and James argued against imposing Jewish customs on Gentiles, suggesting that faith in Christ alone was enough for salvation. They believed the Gospel's core transcended cultural and ceremonial laws, advocating for a focus on faith and moral living.

Bridging Cultures: James's Vision for Unity

James, with a heart for harmony, made a pivotal decision to ease the journey of Gentiles into the faith (Acts 15:13–21). He set forth a few key practices for them to follow, emphasizing the avoidance of idolatry, sexual immorality, consuming strangled animals, and blood. These measures were not about imposing burdens but about weaving a tapestry of fellowship between Hebrews and Gentiles within the church's embrace. James's guidance was more than a set of rules; it was an invitation to a shared moral ground, a commonality bridging diverse backgrounds. In James 15:20–21, he said,

“Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.”

Many commentaries suggest James was listing the Noahide laws (they come from the Talmud and are therefore extra-biblical). Genesis 9 is the foundation for later rabbinic interpretation (note: there is a lack of consensus regarding the precise number and specific directives, as well as which were originally given to Adam and which were later bestowed upon Noah). These include the rejection of idolatry, sexual immorality, and the eating of blood.

The guidelines set forth for the Gentiles were designed not as a burden, but as an open door to mutual respect and understanding. James's method was a deliberate act of kindness, aiming to weave the Gentiles into the fabric of the faith community. It acknowledged their distinct path, while also cherishing the shared values that unite all followers. Is it my opinion that this was a compassionate and merciful invitation, enabling the Gentiles to join in fellowship and gradually deepen their understanding of God's commands.

Fostering Connection Without Conformity

Our relationship with God goes beyond rituals - it's rooted in genuine connection. Practices like prayer and worship enhance this bond, not secure salvation. While observing holidays isn't compulsory, it offers insight into God's story and closeness with Him. Engaging these days revitalizes faith, like divine revelations enriching our spirits. They invite deeper interaction, improving our understanding of His will. As a father values time with his children, God uses feast days to foster intimacy and growth.

An Intimate Journey of Faith

Our observance of these feast days is not out of obligation but a joyous embrace of tradition and devotion. These moments allow us to deepen our communion with God, partaking in His divine plan and purpose. Just as children feel empowered to undertake significant challenges with their parents' support, celebrating these

holy days encourages us on our spiritual journey, fostering meaning, purpose, and growth in alignment with God's seasons.

*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.*

1 Peter 2:21

Celebrating these holidays is intricately linked to our spiritual development and relationship with God. They offer a unique way to communicate with the Divine, drawing us closer and molding our character to reflect God's will during these observances and in our daily lives. Ultimately, participating in these feast days expresses our love for God—a sharing in His life and essence and a deepening of our connection with the Divine Presence that enriches our faith journey. This engagement transcends mere duty, embodying a joyful and fulfilling response to the love and grace bestowed upon us by our Heavenly Father.



WHO BURIED THE TREASURE?

UNEARTHING THE FORGOTTEN FEASTS

Imagine a precious family heirloom, a treasure chest filled with valuable relics and ancient wisdom. Over time, as the family moves to a new country, they slowly lose touch with their heritage. Eventually they forget the importance of this heirloom and its link to their ancestors.

Similarly, the profound spiritual and prophetic insights of the biblical feasts are like that family heirloom. In the early days, when the family (the church) was closely connected to their roots (Judaism), they understood the value of this treasure chest and celebrated it with deep meaning. However, as time passed, the family experienced changes, moved to a different cultural environment, and lost touch with their heritage.

Following Traditions Blindly

You may have heard this story: a woman prepares a roast and cuts off the end before cooking it. When her husband asks why she does this, she replies that she learned it from her mother. The husband then asks the mother, who says she learned it from her grandmother. Finally, when asked, the grandmother reveals that she only cut the end off the roast because her cooking pan was too small to fit the whole roast.

The story's moral is that people often adhere to traditions or ways of doing things without knowing why they were started in the first place. It suggests that it's essential to understand the reasons behind our actions and not follow practices blindly. This story is often used in various contexts to encourage critical thinking and reassessment of customary practices.

The Jewish Early Church

The early church began as a sect within Judaism, predominantly made up of Jews who believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. Initially, the message of Jesus was spread mainly among Jewish communities. However, several key events and figures played a significant role in the transition of the church from a primarily Jewish context to a predominantly Gentile one.

The spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire, where Greek and Roman (Gentile) cultures were dominant, also influenced the shift. As more Gentiles joined, the cultural and religious practices of the church began to reflect a more Hellenistic (Greco-Roman) worldview.

Over time, these factors contributed to the gradual shift of Christianity from a Jewish sect to a predominantly Gentile religion, shaping its development and forming its distinct identity separate from Judaism.

Shift in the Second Century

By the second century, a new generation emerged and distanced themselves from their family's original customs and traditions. This process of de-Judaizing is like the family members deciding to leave their heritage behind and adopt new customs.

Gentile Christians began to dominate the church. This shift gradually removed Jewish customs, a process known as de-Judaizing. Anti-Semitism began to take root. The Gentile-led church sought to distinguish Christianity from Judaism. One significant change was altering the date of celebrating Christ's resurrection from the Jewish calendar (the third day of Passover on Nisan 17) to the Sunday that comes after the first full moon following the vernal equinox, eventually acquiring the pagan name Easter (Ishtarte). The early New Testament church did not celebrate Easter; instead, they continued to observe Passover with a renewed meaning and interpretation.

Changes in the Fourth Century

The Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., under Emperor Constantine, marked a turning point. Constantine's conversion to Christianity ended the persecution of Gentile believers and mixed Christianity with elements of paganism. Jewish believers faced pressure from their Gentile Christian peers to abandon their customs. Constantine even legislated against practices like observing the Sabbath on Saturday and celebrating Passover.

As Christianity distanced itself from its Jewish roots, anti-Judaism (anti-Semitism) began to take hold. Theological disputes between Christians and Jews intensified, leading to a rejection of Jewish practices, including the observance of biblical feast days.

Misinterpretations and Consequences

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28). This verse, which emphasizes the idea that in Christ Jesus, all believers, regardless of their backgrounds, social status, or gender, are united as one, it was often misinterpreted to mean that Jewish Christians should abandon their heritage. This verse emphasizes the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. The Bible acknowledges differences

between various groups but stresses equality in God's eyes. Unfortunately, this misinterpretation led to further distancing from Jewish customs.

Replacement Theology

Replacement theology is an absurd teaching that suggests the Christian church replaces Jews as God's chosen people, a view historically linked to anti-Semitic attitudes. Some interpretations of Galatians 3:28 have fueled this notion, implying that the Christian covenant supersedes the Jewish covenant with God.

In Romans 11, Paul vehemently opposes replacement theology and clarifies Israel's ongoing significance:

- **Israel's Continued Role:** Paul emphatically states that God has not rejected His people (Romans 11:1), affirming Israel's continued place in God's plan.
- **The Olive Tree Analogy:** Using the metaphor of an olive tree, Paul illustrates the relationship between Israel (the original branches) and Gentile believers (grafted-in branches). This analogy (Romans 11:17–24) underscores that Gentiles are incorporated into God's promises without displacing Israel.
- **Partial Hardening and Future Redemption:** Paul speaks of a temporary hardening of Israel until the full inclusion of Gentiles (Romans 11:25–26), pointing to a future redemption for Israel and its ongoing role in God's plan.
- **God's Faithfulness:** Paul underscores the unchanging nature of God's gifts and calling (Romans 11:29), affirming God's continued covenant with Israel alongside His grace to Gentiles.
- **Call to Humility:** Paul warns against Gentile pride (Romans 11:18, 20–21), reminding them of their dependence on Israel's spiritual heritage, and emphasizing humility in their inclusion.

Galatians 3:29 reinforces that followers of Jesus are spiritual descendants of Abraham, inheriting the promises of God through faith in Christ. This verse signifies that the blessings promised to Abraham now extend to all believers, emphasizing the unity of believers in Christ as part of Abraham's spiritual family.

God is Doing a Marvelous Thing

Richard Booker said it so well in *Celebrating Jesus in the Biblical Feasts*:

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.¹

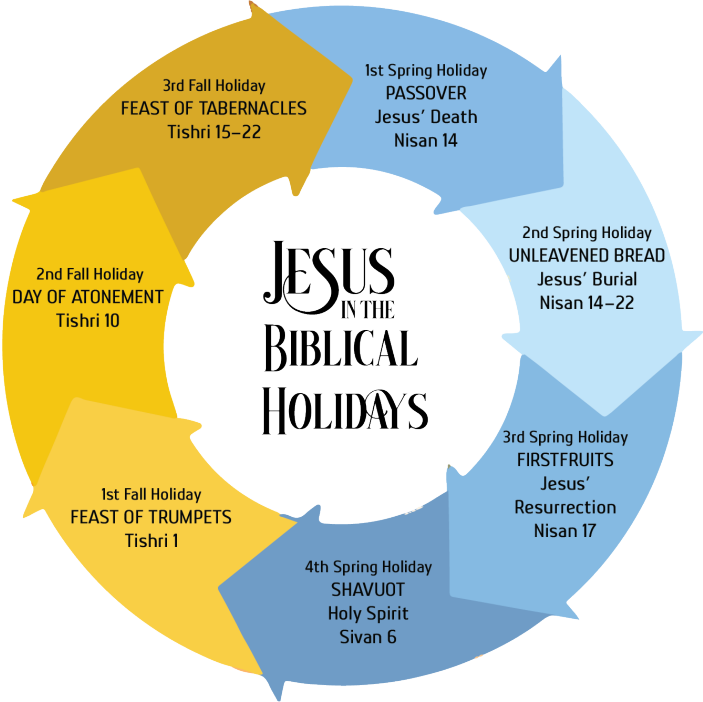
Conclusion

The feasts of the Lord, given to Israel and grafted-in believers (Romans 11:17), serve as practical lessons about God and His plan for the world. Galatians emphasizes that all in Christ are heirs to Abraham's promises, connecting us to a rich spiritual heritage. Understanding this journey enriches our appreciation for the significance of biblical feasts, akin to rediscovering a priceless family heirloom amidst the twists of history.



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1. Booker, Richard. *Celebrating Jesus in the Biblical Feasts Expanded Edition: Discovering Their Significance to You as a Christian*. Destiny Image, 2016.

YOUR TREASURE HUNT



CHARTING YOUR COURSE

Welcome to a journey through time and tradition, where we delve into the rich tapestry of the Bible's feasts, festivals, and fasts. We will traverse the ancient landscapes of Israel, exploring the sacred observances that defined the lives of the Israelites in the Old Testament era, and the enduring traditions that have shaped Jewish practices during and after the Gospel period. While there's an intersection between these lists, they are distinct in their nuances and significance.

A Yearly Companion for Spiritual Growth

My book is designed to serve as a timeless companion for your spiritual journey, especially during the sacred seasons of the biblical feasts. Each year, as these holy dates approach, you can use this book as a study guide to delve deeper into the rich symbolism, historical significance, and spiritual lessons tied to each feast. Whether you're observing alone, with family, or as part of a Bible study group, the insights and reflections offered will enhance your understanding and appreciation of these divine appointments.

By revisiting the chapters corresponding to each feast annually, you'll uncover new layers of meaning and personal relevance, making each celebration a fresh experience of spiritual renewal and growth. This cyclical approach not only enriches your faith but also strengthens the bonds of community as you share and explore these profound truths together. Let this book be your guide to experiencing the biblical feasts as vibrant, living traditions that illuminate your walk with God year after year.

If you're not familiar with these holidays from childhood, distinguishing among them can be challenging. I found it beneficial to categorize them into four spring holidays, three fall holidays, and two extra holidays. This book follows that structure, consistently revisiting the sequence: first spring holiday, second spring holiday, third spring holiday, fourth spring holiday, first fall holiday, second fall holiday, and third fall holiday. This repetitive method is designed to aid your understanding and retention.

The Sections and Chapters

This book is organized into ten-holiday sections. Each includes the following (or more):

1. **The Holiday Overview:** Each section begins with an introduction to the specific holiday, setting the stage for deeper exploration.
2. **Jewish Traditions of the Holiday:** Delve into the rich customs and rituals that have shaped Jewish practices over the centuries.
3. **How Sabbath Reveals Messiah:** Discover the connections between traditional observances and the life and mission of Jesus Christ.

4. **Celebrating Suggestions:** Practical ideas to bring these ancient celebrations into your modern life.
5. **Reflection Questions:** Thought-provoking queries to deepen your understanding and personal connection to each holiday.
6. **The Holiday Recipes:** Enjoy traditional recipes to fully experience the feasts in a tangible way.

Leviticus 23 Holidays

We'll start by exploring Leviticus 23, which details the weekly Sabbath and the seven annual holy days. Hanukkah and Purim, although not part of the seven feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23, are also included, celebrating events that happened well after the time of Moses.

- **The Weekly Sabbath:** A day dedicated to rest and spiritual renewal, observed from Friday evening to Saturday evening. It symbolizes the rest we find in Jesus, our eternal Sabbath, who offers a pause from life's burdens and a rest for our souls.
- **The First Spring Feast, Passover (Pesach):** This holiday commemorates the Israelites' liberation from Egyptian slavery, marked by the seder. It points to Jesus as our Passover Lamb, whose sacrifice brings liberation from the bondage of sin.
- **The Second Spring Feast, Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag HaMatzot):** This seven-day feast following Passover represents purity and the hastened departure of the Israelites from Egypt. It symbolizes the sinless nature of Jesus and the urgency of accepting His salvation.
- **The Third Spring Feast, Firstfruits (Yom Habikkurim):** This feast, celebrated to offer the first fruits of the harvest, symbolizes Jesus's resurrection—the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
- **The Fourth Spring Feast, Feast of Weeks (Shavuot or Pentecost):** This festival celebrates the wheat harvest and the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. It represents the outpouring of the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus, marking the birth of the church.
- **The First Fall Feast, Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah):** A time marked by the blowing of the shofar, signaling repentance; it foreshadows the return of Jesus, often associated with the sound of the trumpet calling believers to look for Him.
- **The Second Fall Feast, Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur):** This is the holiest day of repentance and atonement. It points to Jesus as our High Priest, who entered the Holy of Holies with His blood for our eternal atonement. (Technically, this is a fast rather than a feast.)

- **The Third Fall Feast, Tabernacles (Sukkot):** This feast commemorates the Israelites' journey in the wilderness and God's protection. It symbolizes Jesus as our true tabernacle, God dwelling among His people and providing shelter and guidance.

Two Extra Holidays

The biblical holidays above were established by God, but Scripture also references two extra holidays, Purim and Hanukkah, which were instituted and celebrated by the people of God.

- **Hanukkah:** Hanukkah, typically celebrated in December, is a Jewish holiday marking the Temple's menorah oil miracle and its rededication in Jerusalem.
- **Purim:** Purim, celebrated around February, is a joyful Jewish holiday marking the rescue of the Jews from a planned massacre in ancient Persia, as narrated in the book of Esther.

Three Pilgrimage Festivals

Passover, Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles are three pilgrimage festivals. All adult Jewish males were required to travel to Jerusalem for each celebration. Each of these three festivals aligns with critical agricultural periods in the land of Israel:

- **Passover** corresponds with the barley harvest season.
- **Feast of Weeks** coincides with the wheat harvest.
- **Tabernacles** signifies the end of the fruit harvest season.

Enhancing Faith Through Celebration

All these feasts of the Lord were given to Israel and grafted-in believers (Romans 11:17) to teach us, practically, more about God and His plan for the world. Galatians 3:29 states:

*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed,
and heirs according to the promise.*

This emphasizes that all who are in Christ are part of Abraham's spiritual lineage and inheritors of God's promises. Israel was instructed to observe the feast days because they held the mysteries that God intended to unveil to His children in future years. God communicates to us through recurring imagery, patterns, and symbolic types that appear consistently throughout the Bible.

Join me on a thrilling journey as we explore and embrace the holy days in our

spiritual lives. These days serve not as constraints of legalism but as beacons of light guiding us to freedom in the Messiah. Approach God with a teachable spirit, ready to embrace change. Walking closely with Him offers a life of constant renewal. Engaging with the Bible feast days is not just a commemoration of past events but a journey of transformation. These feasts open our eyes to new perspectives and deepen our understanding of God's plans. Fully commit to this adventure, growing increasingly aware of God's presence in every aspect of life.

Whether you want to incorporate these observances into your spiritual practice, family traditions, or community activities, these chapters provide a wealth of resources. You'll find creative and actionable ways to celebrate these holidays, from family-friendly ideas and recipes to reflective personal rituals and meaningful community engagements.

See Jesus as the vessel of our journey with God (Galatians 5:1), and consider celebrating these feasts as His winds push us toward His blessings. Leviticus 23 acts as our compass, leading us to reflect and grow closer to God. Let's open our hearts to God's Word, uncovering the profound truths it contains.

I hope you'll discover joy in these feasts, as many others have. They're more than rituals; they're insights into God's character and plans for us. May this exploration bring you and your family joy and a deeper understanding of your faith.



AGRICULTURAL PARALLELS

HARVESTING SPIRITUAL RICHES

A deeper appreciation of agriculture has greatly enriched my understanding of the Bible. Most of us today are distanced from nature in today's urbanized world, losing touch with the rich agricultural imagery often used in Scripture, like various harvests, such as wheat, olives, and grapes. This disconnect matters because divine revelation is intricately linked with Creation.

Jesus Himself frequently used natural elements in His parables (such as sheep, wheat, and vines) to reveal spiritual truths. Understanding that God is the Creator of both the natural and supernatural realms helps us see that principles in one often mirror truths in the other.

Ancient Israel: A Land of Faith and Diversity

Imagine ancient Israel, a land of diverse landscapes and rich cultural and religious practices. Here, amidst rolling hills and fertile plains, the Israelites' faith was closely tied to their land. Their divinely ordained feasts, established through Moses, marked the agricultural year and their spiritual rhythm.

Dual Significance of Feasts

Each feast had dual importance: agriculturally, they aligned with planting and harvest times; spiritually, they commemorated God's acts of faithfulness and deliverance. For instance, Passover was a spring festival and a powerful remembrance of the Exodus, central to Jewish history and identity.

Communal Celebrations and Transformations

These feasts were communal cornerstones, fostering unity and shared purpose. Picture the vibrant energy in ancient Jerusalem during these times as people from various backgrounds gathered to remember, celebrate, and give thanks. Over time, these feasts evolved with Jewish life, especially after the Temple's destruction, shifting from sacrificial rituals to prayer and personal holiness. Yet, their core as times for reflection, repentance, and renewal remained unchanged.

Nature's Rhythm in Ancient Israel

The ancient Israelites experienced cycles of rainy and dry periods rather than four distinct seasons. Early autumn rains prepared the ground for winter and spring showers, which nurtured crops to harvest. Summer brought thriving orchards and vineyards nourished by dew.

The rhythm of rain and sun governed harvests: barley and wheat from March to June and fruits like grapes, figs, and olives from August to November. Despite the bounty, challenges like famine and unpredictable rains tested the Israelites' resilience. In these trials, they found solace in God's care, contrasting with the distant gods of neighboring cultures.

Early and Later Firstfruits

The term "firstfruits" appears throughout the Bible, serving both literal and metaphorical roles, which might lead to confusion. Here's a clarification: "Firstfruits" are tied to the agricultural seasons of ancient Israel, reflecting both "early firstfruits" and "later firstfruits." The early firstfruits marked the beginning of the grain harvest, and the later firstfruits represented the broader range of agricultural produce. These offerings symbolized dedicating the first and best harvests to God, expressing gratitude and worship. Here is more clarification:

Early Firstfruits:

This is the third spring holiday, the Feast of Firstfruits, presented before the Lord in a wave offering ceremony during Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread.

- Exodus 23:16, Exodus 34:22, Leviticus 23:10–11, Numbers 18:12, and Deuteronomy 26:1–11
- Refers to the very first ripened barley sheaf at the outset of the grain harvest in early spring
- Offered as the premiere firstfruits offering, marking the commencement of the barley harvest
- Represented by early crops like barley and wheat
- Signified new life and promise of the fuller harvest still to be gathered

Later Firstfruits:

Later firstfruits refers to the Feast of Weeks, the fourth spring holiday, which culminates with the offering of wheat bread.

- Leviticus 23:15–21, Numbers 28:26–31, 1 Corinthians 15:20–23, and

Acts 2:1–4

- Refers to firstfruits offered from crops ripening weeks later i.e. grapes, olives, figs, etc.
- Offered at the end of spring and into summer
- Represented by fruits, vegetables, and grain crops maturing later
- Expanded upon the early firstfruits to eventually include all first produce
- Reinforced ongoing dedication of best to God

Both Firstfruits Revealed Christ as Messiah

The dual nature of firstfruits in Scripture helps reveal Christ's messiahship in a profound light.

- Early Firstfruits: Christ's resurrection symbolizes the initial offering of new life.
- Later Firstfruits: His ascension initiates the continuous gathering of believers.

Timekeeping in Ancient Hebrew Culture

In the tenth century BC, while kings measured years by their reigns, villagers' timekeeping revolved around the agricultural cycle, as seen in Ruth 2:23. Time was marked by sowing and harvesting, reflecting a profound bond with the land.

The Hebrew Calendar: A Lunisolar System

The Hebrew calendar is lunisolar, which is based on the moon's phases and the solar year. It consists of twelve or thirteen months, with the addition of a leap month in seven out of every nineteen years to keep the calendar in alignment with the solar year. The Hebrew months do not perfectly align with the Gregorian calendar months (used in the United States and most of the world) because they start on the new moon and can vary in length. Here is a general guide to how the Hebrew months typically coincide with the American (Gregorian) months, keeping in mind that the exact start and end dates of Hebrew months can shift within the Gregorian calendar:

1. Nisan (Nissan): March–April
2. Iyar: April–May
3. Sivan: May–June

4. Tammuz: June–July
5. Av: July–August
6. Elul: August–September
7. Tishrei: September–October
8. Cheshvan (MarCheshvan): October–November
9. Kislev: November–December
10. Tevet: December–January
11. Shevat: January–February
12. Adar: February–March

These alignments can vary slightly from year to year due to the lunisolar nature of the Hebrew calendar and its adjustments for leap years. In leap years, Adar is split into Adar I and Adar II, with Purim celebrated in Adar II.

Conclusion

Understanding their agricultural context is essential to appreciating the ancient Israelite feasts fully. These celebrations intertwined with the land's seasonal patterns, marking spiritual milestones and critical agrarian events. This perspective reveals the feasts, not just as religious practices but as integrations of daily life, survival, and gratitude for the earth's gifts. This link between faith, culture, and agriculture provides deeper insights into ancient rituals and their lasting influence.



COMPARING CALENDARS



| | HEBREW | GREGORIAN |
|----|---------|-----------|
| 1 | Nisan | Mar/Apr |
| 2 | Iyar | Apr/May |
| 3 | Sivan | May/Jun |
| 4 | Tammuz | Jun/Jul |
| 5 | Av | Jul/Aug |
| 6 | Elul | Aug/Sep |
| 7 | Tishrei | Sep/Oct |
| 8 | Heshvan | Oct/Nov |
| 9 | Kislev | Nov/Dec |
| 10 | Tevet | Dec/Jan |
| 11 | Shevat | Jan/Feb |
| 12 | Adar | Feb/Mar |

SPRING

FALL