

Finishing the Feasts

God seems to love festivals and has used them not only to bless His people with reasons to worship and fellowship but also to appreciate His divine plan, for each of the seven that He specifically ordained have prophetic fulfillments. Four of them have been fulfilled in the first appearing of Jesus Christ and the consequent birth of His church. Briefly:

Pesach or Passover was fulfilled on the day of this festival when Jesus was crucified. He was the true Passover Lamb that all the sacrifices pointed to since Moses first told the Hebrew slaves to kill a lamb and place its blood upon the door openings and in the basin (see Exo 12). Where they placed the blood pictured the bloody head, arms and feet of Christ on the cross. Also, there have been some very symbolic traditions:

- The lamb which the High Priest was to sacrifice would be brought from the Mount of Olives, down the road, through the gate into Jerusalem, and finally to the temple. Once there, it was put on display for three days. The people would line the road, laying palm fronds and their cloaks on the road for the lamb to walk upon. When Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem, the people forsook the Passover lamb, in

favor of the true Lamb of God. Jesus then spent three days in the temple, being questioned by the Pharisees, Sadducees, and lawyers.

- For the Passover meal, the lamb was roasted whole. However, it was done in an unusual way. For Passover, the animal's entrails would be removed and wrapped around the head, forming a crown. Once the lamb was skewered, it was roasted over a fire vertically, not horizontally. As you can see, this pictures Jesus on the cross, with the crown of thorns around His head.
- During the Passover, only unleavened bread would be eaten. In addition, leaven, which symbolizes sin, would be removed from the whole house. Jesus was the only One found without sin. Before cooking, the unleavened bread would have rows of holes pierced in it. Similarly, Jesus was pierced for our transgressions. When it was cooked, brown stripes would form between the rows of holes. The Bible says that by His (Jesus') stripes, we are healed.
- As part of the Passover meal, three pieces of this bread are stacked and placed in a linen bag. The middle one is removed, and the others set aside. This middle cracker, called the afikoman is broken. Part of it is wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden. In like

fashion, Jesus was broken for us, wrapped in linen, and buried. At the end of the meal, the children search for the afikoman. When it is found, it is unwrapped for all to see. Whichever child finds it, receives a prize. Whoever finds Jesus also receives a prize, eternal life.

The next feast is all about this unleavened bread. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the day after Pesach and was a continuation of the Passover. It lasted for seven days (see Lev 23:6). Recalling that leaven in the scriptures speaks of sin, this unleavened bread pictures a needed purity of that which we as believers take in. Jesus' perfectly pure life fulfilled this. As the spotless Lamb of God, His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary was acceptable to God. Believing that is 'taking in' to our hearts. Unleavened bread also symbolizes the manna that the Israelites ate when they traveled through the wilderness. This reminds us of Jesus' own words, *As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.* (John 6:57,58)

The Feast of First Fruits was celebrated soon after the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (see Lev 23:10,11; Deut 26:1-4) The first of the barley harvest was dedicated to God, and brought before Him.

The Jewish people recognized that it was God who brought the increase, and it all belonged to Him. By giving the first part, they were recognizing God as the provider. Christ fulfilled this holiday literally with His resurrection, "on the day after the Sabbath" and thus He is called the "firstborn among many brethren". (Rom 8:29)

The Feast of Weeks which we know as Pentecost was celebrated 50 days after this last feast. This celebrated the harvest and was again, fulfilled to the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers gathered together in the upper room. Three thousand souls were saved that day, and the church was born having a commission to reap the harvest of souls in all nations.

Hence, there remain three festivals or feasts to be fulfilled. They are all in the fall season. The first is the Feast of Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah. This festival starts the new year with the blowing of the ram's horn trumpet, hence the name. Since it is a preparation of repentance, the traditional activities center around looking at sins. It has become customary to go down to the sea, filling one's pockets with rocks along the way. Once there, the rocks are thrown as far as possible into the sea, identifying one area of sin with each rock. As they are thrown, it symbolizes a cleansing, representing God removing the sins to the bottom of the sea.

This feast will be fulfilled at the last trumpet (as opposed to the

first – see Exo 19:16) and the voice of our Savior calling us up in the Rapture of the church (see 1 Cor 15:51-55). In a glorious transformation, all our sin natures will be left behind forever. Though we know the day of this festival, Jesus said that no one knows the day or hour of this event. It is always to be considered imminent. It's position, however, preceding the next feast is very relevant for its fulfillment will surely precede the fulfillment of the following one.

The sixth holy day is the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. This is the only solemn feast - all the nation of Israel would fast together, coming before Him, to atone for their sin. This is the one day of the year when the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies, bringing the blood to place on the mercy seat. The temple of God and all the worship items in it were consecrated anew to the Lord. For more detail on this, please see our letter entitled "Seven Weeks". I'm strongly inclined to believe this will be fulfilled when the 144,000 saints of the tribes of Israel are saved by grace, sealed and sent, like the church, to continue God's witness in a godless world (see Rev 7). They will bring the atoning grace of God through Jesus Christ to both Jew and gentile in the terrible days of the tribulation.

Finally, there remains the Feast of Tabernacles or Sukkot. This seven day festival commemorates God's provision while the nation of Israel wandered in the wilderness. In addition, the people express thanksgiving to God for His

continued provision in their lives. During this festival, the people live in, or at least take their meals in temporary shelters, commemorating that time. The family starts building their sukkah (tabernacle) immediately after Yom Kippur. It is noteworthy that this is the only feast that will be celebrated throughout the millennial reign of Christ. (see Zech 14:16-19) As such, it will undoubtedly also commemorate the caring of God for His remnant of Jewish believers in the wilderness during the tribulation. From its place in the sequence of feasts and its symbolism, I'll suggest that it will be fulfilled in the second coming of Christ, the victory of Jesus and His saints at Armageddon and the ushering in of the millennial age.

Now, one of the timing aspects of the tribulation has always seemed very important. It is represented in the following prophetic scriptures:

*But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for **forty-two months**. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**, clothed in sackcloth.* Rev 11:2,3

*Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**.*

Rev 12:6

*But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for **a time and times and half a time**, from the presence of the serpent.* Rev 12:14

*So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for **forty-two months**. Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.* Rev 13:4-6

He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand

*For **a time and times and half a time**.* Dan 7:25

And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?"

*Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for **a time, times, and half a time**; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all*

these things shall be finished. Dan 12:6,7

*And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be **one thousand two hundred and ninety days**. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the **one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days**.* Dan 12:11,12

In these scriptures we see periods of time measured in days, months and "times". All but the last two specify the same length of time – three and a half prophetic years. All of them refer to events during the tribulation:

- The treading underfoot of Jerusalem by non-Jews -- 42 months
- The blaspheming God by the antichrist -- 42 months
- The prophesying of the two witnesses -- 1260 days
- The feeding and nourishing by God of the Jewish remnant of believers in the wilderness -- 1260 days or 3 ½ years
- The persecuting of the saints (believers in Christ) -- 3 ½ years
- The shattering of the power of the Hebrew people -- 3 ½ years

We also know from scripture: *And he (the antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease...* (Dan 9:27) The word for "midst" is "half" and comes from the word meaning "to cut in two". As such, it is potentially a bit less specific

than the numbers above. What we see here, though, is that the antichrist will confirm a covenant with a large group for seven years. This action will be the trigger for the tribulation period also known as the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy in chapter nine.

In the middle of this period he will stop two things – sacrifice and offerings (oblation). Now, offerings refer to such things as the grain offerings, peace offerings and daily sacrificial offerings, but I contend that the stated sacrifice refers to the annual sacrifice that most angers the spiritual power (Satan) behind antichrist – the Passover. The Passover symbolizes Christ's victory over Satan on the cross of Calvary. It is represented in the very first sacrifice in the Bible (Abel's) as well as Abraham's sacrifice on Mt. Mariah. Makes sense that it would be the one sacrifice he will most want to cease.

During the first half of the tribulation, the antichrist will blaspheme God and seemingly get away with it. During the latter 1260 days, Jerusalem will be trodden underfoot of the gentiles, the power of the Hebrew people will be shattered and the saints – the Hebrew remnant of believers – will be protected and cared for in the wilderness by God.

Meanwhile, the two witnesses will be testifying in Israel to the truth. Though it seems in the book of Revelation that their ministry will be predominantly during the latter half of the tribulation, the exact start and end dates are not given.

At some point close to the middle of the tribulation “week”, the antichrist will place in the temple ‘his image’ which will likely be the “abomination of desolation”. At the same time, he will stop the daily sacrifice or offerings. That action starts another clock ticking. You see, confirming the covenant started the seven year (2520 day) ticker. Stopping the daily offerings and placing the abomination of desolation starts the 1290 day ticker.

Recall above, we pointed out that the final feast, Sukkot, will be fulfilled at the conclusion of the tribulation, and it would seem that the annual sacrifice which the antichrist's stops in the middle of it is the Pesach or Passover. Keeping in mind that the Passover feast, which includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is eight days long, if we look at the time between the end of the Passover feast and the beginning of the Sukkot feast in the third year following, lo and behold, it is frequently 1260 days. Examples are:

Pesach 2016 → Sukkot 2019
Pesach 2019 → Sukkot 2022
Pesach 2020 → Sukkot 2023

I cannot believe that's coincidental. To fulfill the 1290 day ticker, it could be that the daily sacrifices or offerings will be stopped thirty days earlier than the conclusion of Passover. Putting the abomination of desolation in place would happen at the same time, but making it fully operational may take the additional thirty days.

There is another possibility though – from the end of Pesach 2021 to the beginning of Sukkot 2024 is exactly 1290 days.

Waiting the additional 45 days, making a total of 1335, leads to a blessing. The beginning of the reign of Christ on earth will certainly be blessing. The resurrection of the OT believers will be a blessing to many. The giving of ruling authority as kings and priests will be a blessing. Perhaps this additional waiting period refers to one of these.

In summary, I am very much inclined to believe, whatever the case may be, that the events of the latter half of the tribulation will be ‘bookended’ by the final Pesach and the fulfilled Sukkot. This will finish the prophetic fulfillments of the feasts.