



# The Sanctuary — The Spring Feasts

Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Feast of Weeks

In the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus are recorded the feasts and holy convocations which the Lord commanded His people to observe. There are seven in all. Three of them are the great festivals of the year—the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Of these it is written: “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty.” Deut 16:16. (Andreasen, *The Sanctuary Service*, p. 211)

The two words used to denote “feasts” and “holy convocations” differ considerably in their meaning. *Hag*, which belongs especially to the three feasts names, means “a joyous occasion, a festival, a feast.” *Mo’ed* has reference rather to appointed times, stated observances, holy convocations, or solemn meeting. An example of *Mo’ed* would be the Day of Atonement, which was not a feast or festival in any sense of the word, but a holy convocation. (Lev 23:26–32.) (Ibid.)

Besides the Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, there were three others: the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of First Fruits. (Verses 24, 6, 9–14, Ex 12:17; Num 28:17.)

The two last-named feasts were celebrated in connection with the observance of Passover, but are plainly spoken of as distinct from it. (Ibid.)

# Spring Feasts — Lev 23, Num 28

- The Passover — 14th day of 1st month
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread — 15th day  
1st month for 7 days
- The Offering of the First Fruits — Lev 23:11;  
Num 28:26–31
- Feast of Weeks — Lev 23:16, 17

# The Passover

Exodus 12:1–13 21–28

On the 10th day of the first month a lamb was selected for each household “according to the number of the souls,” or if the household was small, two or more households could unite for one sacrifice. The lamb was kept until the 14th day, when it was killed in the late afternoon, and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts. The same night the flesh was eaten. Only unleavened bread could be used, with bitter herbs (v. 8). (M. L. Andreasen, *SDA BC*)

The Passover commemorated Israel's departure from Egypt. But it also looked forward to "Christ our Passover," who was to be "sacrificed for us." (Ibid.)

For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:  
(1 Cor. 5:7)



# Comparison

- Num 9:12 and John 19:32–33, 36 —no broken bones
- Jesus died at Passover time — John 19:14
- Sprinkling of the blood meant a deliverance from death — Ex 12:13 and Christ's blood gives us deliverance from death — Rom 3:25
- The passover sacrifice was a lamb — Ex 12:3; John 1:29
- Without blemish — Ex 12:5; 1 Peter 1:19
- The flesh was to be eaten — Ex 12:7; John 6:51

On the cross provision is made for everyone to be saved, but we have to receive this provision— John 1:12. The death of the lamb provided the means of salvation, but the blood must be applied to us individually. Both are necessary. The sprinkling of the blood is fully as important as the death of the lamb. Yet even this was not enough; the flesh must be eaten, and it must be eaten under the specified conditions (Ex 12:11). And this was not enough; all leaven must be purged away (v. 15). Carelessness in the least particular would be fraught with tragic results (Ex 12:13, 19, 23). (Ibid.)

It is one thing to be saved from death. It is another to have the means of sustaining life. This was provided positively by eating the lamb; negatively, by abstaining from leaven. Christ is “the living bread which came down from heaven,” of which a man must eat if he would “live for ever” (John 6:51). The lamb was to be roasted entire (Ex 12:9). For each lamb there was to be a sufficient number of people so that all the flesh would be eaten (Ex 12:4). Nothing was to be carried out of the house, and nothing left until morning. Whatever remained of those parts that could not be eaten was to be burned (Ex 12:10, 46). Similarly, the Christian must assimilate completely the life of the One represented by the lamb. This means the entire identification of the believer with Christ. It means accepting fully the life and character of Jesus. (Ibid.)

The NT counterpart of the Passover is found in the Lord's Supper, the communion service. After Christ had come, there could be no more virtue in slaying the Passover lamb, which prefigured His coming. But there would be virtue in commemorating the sacrifice of Calvary and its sustaining power. For this reason our Lord instituted the symbolic meal of communion, the purpose of which is to remind us of the provision made for our salvation upon the cross. Like its prototype, it points both backward and forward—we are to remember Calvary “till he come” (1 Cor 11:26). (Ibid.)

# Feast of Unleavened Bread

*The feast of unleavened bread.* Closely connected with the Passover, yet distinct from it, was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed. For practical purposes the two feasts were considered as one, and the names are often used interchangeably. But in purpose they were somewhat different. The Passover stood for deliverance (Ex 12:13); the unleavened bread was reminiscent of the haste in which Israel left Egypt (Ex 12:33, 39; Deut 16:3). God was explicit as to the manner in which the Feast of Unleavened Bread should be celebrated (Ex 12:15). Of it Paul later said, “Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8).

(Ibid.)

Leaven was to be entirely excluded. It represents malice and wickedness (1 Cor 5:8), and false doctrine, as exemplified in the teachings of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians (Matt 16:6, 12; Mark 8:15). The leaven of the Pharisees is greed and injustice (Matt 23:13, 14), false zeal (v. 15), wrong estimates of spiritual values (vs. 16–22), omission of justice, mercy, and faith (v. 23), vain punctiliousness (v. 24), hypocrisy (vs. 25–28), intolerance (vs. 29–33), and cruelty (vs. 34–36). The leaven of the Sadducees is skepticism (Matt 22:23) and a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures and of the power of God (v. 29). The leaven of the Herodians is flattery, worldly-mindedness, and hypocrisy (vs. 16–21), and plotting evil against God’s representatives (Mark 3:6). (Ibid.)

- Malice, wickedness
- False doctrine
- Greed, injustice
- False zeal
- Wrong estimates of spiritual values
- Omission of mercy, justice, faith
- Vain punctiliousness (attention to detail or correct behavior)
- Hypocrisy



- Intolerance
- Cruelty
- Skepticism
- Lack of knowledge of the Scripture and of the power of God
- Flattery, worldly-mindedness
- Plotting evil against God's representatives

*No servile work.* The first and last days of the feast were days of holy convocation on which no servile work was to be done (Num 28:18). Each day two bullocks were offered, one ram, and seven lambs for a burnt offering, with their accompanying cereal offerings, and one goat for a sin offering (Num 28:19–24). (Ibid.)

# The Sheaf of First Fruits

The presentation of the first fruits was a part of the celebration of the days of unleavened bread. The presentation took place on the “morrow after the sabbath,” the 16th of Abib (Lev 23:11). This day was neither a “holy convocation” nor a “sabbath.” But an important work was nevertheless done on that day. On the 14th day of Abib a certain portion of a field of barley was marked off to be cut down in preparation for the presentation on the 16th. Three select men cut the barley in the presence of witnesses, having already tied the sheaves together before cutting them. (Ibid.)

After being cut the sheaves were all tied together into one large sheaf and presented before the Lord as a “sheaf of the firstfruits.” In addition, a perfect male lamb, a cereal offering mingled with oil, and a drink offering were presented to God (vs. 12, 13). Not until this was done could Israel make use of the fruits of the field for themselves. This ceremony pointed to “Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor 15:23).  
(Ibid.)

*A statute for ever.* A summary of the Passover lends emphasis to the great central truths of Christianity. The Passover is symbolic of the death of Christ. As the Passover lamb died, so Christ died. The blood of the lamb delivered Israel of old from the destroying angel. The blood of Christ now reconciles all who come to Him in faith. (Ibid.)

The Passover is also symbolic of the resurrection, as typified in the wave sheaf. The lamb died on the evening of the 14th day of Abib. On the 16th, the “morrow after the sabbath,” the first fruits, previously cut, were presented before the Lord. Christ died Friday afternoon and rested in the grave over the Sabbath (Luke 23:53–56). On the morrow after the Sabbath (Luke 24:1) Christ “the firstfruits” (1 Cor 15:20) was raised from the grave, and presented Himself before His heavenly Father (John 20:17). (Ibid.)

The “morrow after the sabbath” (Lev 23:11) was neither “an holy convocation” nor a “sabbath,” in type or antitype, yet an important work was done on that day. When Christ arose on the first day of the week He ascended to the Father to hear the words of God’s acceptance of His sacrifice. (Ibid.)



The Passover promoted fellowship. The eating of the Passover lamb brought families and neighbors together. It was a communal meal typifying deliverance, and deliverance called for consecration. All sin must be put aside. No leaven was to remain in the house. Every corner must be examined for traces of it. Nothing less than complete “holiness to the Lord” would be accepted (see Ps 29:2; 96:9). The Passover was a most solemn occasion. (Ibid.)

All this, and more, the Passover meant to Israel of old. The Lord's Supper should mean no less to us today. There is grave danger that we forget, or fail to appreciate, the wonderful blessings God has in store for those who worthily partake of the ordinances of the Lord's house. We would do well to study the Passover as given to Israel, that we may appreciate the more Him who is our real Passover Lamb, and whose death is commemorated in the communion service. (Ibid.)

The slaying of the Passover lamb was a shadow of the death of Christ. Says Paul: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Corinthians 5:7. The sheaf of first fruits, which at the time of the Passover was waved before the Lord, was typical of the resurrection of Christ. Paul says, in speaking of the resurrection of the Lord and of all His people: "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." 1 Corinthians 15:23. Like the wave sheaf, which was the first ripe grain gathered before the harvest, Christ is the first fruits of that immortal harvest of redeemed ones that at the future resurrection shall be gathered into the garner of God. (*GC 399.2*)

These types were fulfilled, not only as to the event, but as to the time. On the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, the very day and month on which for fifteen long centuries the Passover lamb had been slain, Christ, having eaten the Passover with His disciples, instituted that feast which was to commemorate His own death as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” That same night He was taken by wicked hands to be crucified and slain. And as the antitype of the wave sheaf our Lord was raised from the dead on the third day, “the first fruits of them that slept,” a sample of all the resurrected just, whose “vile body” shall be changed, and “fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Verse 20; Philippians 3:21. (*GC 399.3*)

# Feast of Weeks or Pentecost

*Lev 23:15*—That is, seven weeks.

*Fifty days.* This feast came on the 50th day after the presentation of the wave sheaf on the 16th of Abib, that is, on the 6th day of the third month—late in May or early in June. It was known as the “feast of weeks,” or “firstfruits” (Ex 34:22). In NT times it was known as “Pentecost,” from a Greek word meaning “fifty.” (Ibid.)

As the wave sheaf was presented at the beginning of the harvest, before any of the new yield might be used, so Pentecost marked the end of the harvest season, though some grain might remain to be harvested in the higher mountains. It was the joyous acknowledgment of Israel's dependence upon God as the giver of all good gifts. At this time it was not a sheaf that was presented, but two wave loaves of fine flour, baked with leaven, together with seven lambs, a bullock, and two rams (Lev 23:17, 18). These were accompanied by a goat for a sin offering and two lambs for a peace offering (v. 19). (Ibid.)

In the Passover celebration it was particularly enjoined that no leaven was to be eaten or found.

At Pentecost two loaves were to be presented, “baken with leaven.” Verse 17. The wave sheaf is

“Christ the firstfruits” (1 Cor 15:23). He was without sin. The bread is partly man’s work. It is imperfect; it is mixed with leaven. But it is accepted. It is waved “before the Lord, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.” Verse 20. Andreasen, p. 220)



Pentecost symbolizes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As the wave loaves were offered 50 days after the wave sheaf was presented, so there were just 50 days between the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). Forty of these days Christ spent on earth instructing and helping His disciples (Acts 1:3). Then He ascended, and for 10 days the 11 disciples continued in prayer and supplication until “the day of Pentecost was fully come.” With Pentecost came the fullness of the Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4). (Ibid.)

These ten days were important ones for the church on earth. They were also important in heaven. When Christ “ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Eph 4:8). Those who had been raised at Christ’s death and had come “out of the graves after his resurrection” ascended with Him to heaven, and were then presented before the Father a kind of first fruits of the resurrection (Matt 27:52, 53).

(Ibid.)