

Title:            **LET NONE COME EMPTY**

Text:            Exodus 23:10-19

Subject:        *The Three Annual Feasts of the Law*

Date:            Tuesday Evening — September 30, 2008

Tape :            Exodus #82

Readings:      *Larry Criss and Rex Bartley*

Introduction:

We often urge sinners to come to Christ as “empty handed beggars.” But the law of God specifically requires that none appear before the holy Lord God empty. — “*They shall not appear before the LORD empty!*” That is the language of the law; and that is my subject. — **LET NONE COME EMPTY**. If we come to God, we must bring something with us. Our text is Exodus 23:10-19. What does God require us to bring to him? Let’s open the Book of God and find out what it is that he requires us to bring to him.

(Exodus 23:10-19) “And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: (11) But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard. (12) Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed. (13) And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth. (14) Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. (15) Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) (16) And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (17) Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD. (18) Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. (19) The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk.”

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**SABBATH REFRESHMENT**

There are multitudes who talk about keeping a sabbath day in the most severe and morbid terms imaginable; but here (vv. 10-12) sabbath observance is spoken of as a time of rest and refreshment and as a special provision for the poor.

**Sabbath keeping was central and essential to the worship of God in the typical days of ceremonial, Old Testament law.** God could no more be worship without sabbath observance than he could be worshipped without blood. Sabbath keeping was as essential to the worship of God as the blood of a lamb on the day of atonement. Therefore, before giving the children of Israel instructions about the three annual feasts for which every man in Israel was required to gather at God's altar, Moses was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to expand and elaborate upon the fourth commandment. — *"Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy"* (Exodus 20:8).

In verses 10 and 11 we see that **God required Israel to observe a yearly sabbath as well as the weekly sabbath.** Every seventh year he required the children of Israel to let the land rest. They were not allowed to plant their crops, or even to gather the fruits and vegetables that the fields, and vineyards, and gardens, and orchards brought forth on their own (Leviticus 25:3-7). In verse 12 the Lord again commands the observance of a weekly Saturday sabbath. These sabbath laws served to remind Israel and to teach us that...

- We have our bread by the hand of God, not by the labor of our own hands. — We are to live in dependence upon our God, not depending upon the arm of the flesh. — (**Illus**: The Current Economic Crisis)
- *"The earth is the "LORD'S."* — We are only temporary tenants on the land. It belongs to God. We own nothing.

**But notice the reasons God gives for these commandments in verse 11 and 12.**

- *"That the poor of thy people may eat."*
- *"Thou shalt rest."*
- *"The stranger may be refreshed."*

The sabbath was to be kept every week and every year, as **a constant reminder** to Israel of that sweet rest which Adam lost in the Garden and of

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that blessed rest that could and would be recovered only in and by Christ. **The sabbath was entirely intended and only intended to typify salvation in Christ, the blessed rest of life, and faith, and reconciliation to God in him.**

“**No work**” whatsoever was to be done on the sabbath, because salvation is altogether a matter of grace, a work of grace alone, enjoyed by faith in Christ, without our works of any kind. **No other festival in the Old Testament had such a strict an injunction put on it except the day of atonement.**

Do you see the significance of that? **The rest of faith is the same as the rest of complete, perfect atonement, and the rest of complete reconciliation to God.** This is what was typified in the beginning, when the Lord God rested from all his works on the seventh day.

**Is it so with your soul?** Do you have such rest in Christ with God as if you had never sinned? Do you have you no more conscience of sin? This is the rest Christ has won for all who trust him. Oh, come now to the Lord Jesus Christ and rest! Cease from all work and labor, and rest and be refreshed in him.

(Matthew 11:28-30) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.”

(Hebrews 4:3) “For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

(Hebrews 4:7) “Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

**Here is “a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined”** (Isaiah 25:6). This rest of faith and this sabbath feast is good, oh, how good! But the rest of heaven will be glorious!

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(Hebrews 4:9) “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

Then, in verse 13, we are admonished to strictly and circumspectly observe these things.

(Exodus 23:13) “And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.”

I take that to mean that God counts the mixture of our works with the work of his Son for our salvation to be nothing but crass blasphemy and base idolatry. Let us not take the name of the heathen’s god, “Free Will,” to our lips, except to condemn it.

**THREE FEASTS OF FAITH**

In verses 14-17 the Lord commanded the children of Israel to observe three annual feasts in which he required all the men of Israel to come to his altar and worship for a week: The feast of unleavened bread, the feast of harvest, and the feast of ingathering. **These three annual feasts of worship were great feasts of faith.** Keeping them was an outward display of faith and a ceremonial picture of that salvation that we have by faith in Christ.

(Exodus 23:14-17) “Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. (15) Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:) (16) And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, *which is* in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (17) Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD.”

Women and children were allowed to come and did; but every man was required to come because the man is the head of the house and the representative of the family.

**THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD**

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The feast of unleavened bread, though distinct from the passover in commonly looked upon as a continuation of the passover feast. On the passover night the children of Israel ate the Lamb with their coats on their backs, their shoes on their feet, and their staffs in their hands, ready to go out of Egypt. The passover sacrifice was the cause of deliverance. The feast of unleavened bread represents the effects of redemption.

- The sacrifice of the paschal lamb (Christ — His Shed Blood!) is the effectual cause of pardon.
- The sweet fellowship of faith, represented in the feast of unleavened bread, is the effect, the sure and certain result of Christ's death as our Substitute.

This feast was a constant reminder of God's great work of grace in bringing Israel out of Egypt by his mighty power and stretched out arm, because of the blood that was shed for them (Exodus 12-14). But it was more than that. **The passover and this feast of unleavened bread that followed it were, together, a picture of and a constant reminder of God's promise to send a Redeemer, even Christ our Passover, who is sacrificed for us** (1 Corinthians 5:7).

(1 Corinthians 5:7) "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:"

Three things were prominent in the first passover — (1.) A Lamb — (2.) Blood! — (3.) Deliverance! It was pre-eminently "*the LORD'S passover!*" It was called "*the LORD'S passover*" because the whole of the work was his.

- He ordained it.
- He provided the lamb.
- He accepted the lamb.
- He passed over the people.
- He brought them out of Egypt and across the Red Sea.
- He was praised for it (Exodus 15).
- "*Salvation is of the LORD!*"

**The feast of unleavened bread pictures faith in Christ** (John 6:53-56).

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(John 6:53-56) “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. (54) Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (56) He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”

**Don’t miss the connection** of the feast of unleavened bread with the feast of passover. The feast of unleavened bread began the next day after the passover was ended. So, too, the gift of life and faith in Christ follows the accomplishments of Christ at Calvary. All who were redeemed by blood shall be made to live and feed upon Christ at God’s appointed time.

(Galatians 3:13-14) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: (14) That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

As one great family the children of Israel kept the first day of this feast as a “*holy convocation*.” No servile work was done. It was a blessed time of rest. (Faith in Christ is a perpetual sabbath rest.) The people were all joined together, united in one holy body of redeemed souls, remembering what God had done for them.

- They were all bought with the same blood.
- They were all saved by the same power.
- They were all going to the same homeland.
- They all ate the same bread.

(Ephesians 3:18-19) “May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

(Ephesians 4:1-7) “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, (2) With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; (3) Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (4) *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye

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are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. (7) But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.”

**As often as we eat the bread and drink the wine at the Lord’s Table, like Israel of old, in the Feast of unleavened bread, we show forth the Lord’s death until he comes again, in remembrance of him.**

- In Remembrance of Redemption Finished—Atonement!
- In Hope of Redemption Future—Resurrection Glory!

Do you remember the question I asked at the beginning of my message? — **What does God require us to bring to him?** Remember, **what God requires he gives and the only thing he will ever accept is that which he himself has given.** His name is Jehovah-jireh. He will provide! He will provide himself! And he will be seen in the provision he makes! **God required the observance of this feast of unleavened bread with this assurance in the last line of verse 15:** — “*And none shall appear before me empty!*” That which the children of Israel brought to the Lord God was that which he had given them to bring: The Passover Lamb! — The Firstfruit Sheaves!

(Deuteronomy 16:16-17) “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: (17) Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.”

- Christ is what we must bring: His Blood and His Righteousness.
- Grace is what we receive by the Sacrifice we bring, free, bounteous, infinite grace!

(1 Peter 1:18-20) “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; (19) But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: (20) Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,”

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(Psalms 115:1) “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth’s sake.”

**THE FEAST OF HARVEST**

The feast of harvest is the same as the feast of weeks — Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22; Deuteronomy 16:16-17). It was held fifty days (seven weeks and a day — a sabbath) after the feast of firstfruits. It is commonly called “Pentecost” because it was held on the 50<sup>th</sup> day. This is the harvest, or ingathering feast. This great harvest feast **speaks of ingathering of God’s elect by Christ.**

The risen Christ gave us a delightful picture and foretaste of the ingathering of his elect in Acts 2:1-4. When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, he poured out his Spirit upon all flesh and 3000 souls were gathered into the fold of his grace at one time. Just as the harvest followed the firstfruits, so the salvation of God’s elect follows the resurrection of Christ. Indeed, all the redeemed shall be gathered unto God by the risen Christ.

(Isaiah 43:5-7) “Fear not: for I *am* with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; (6) I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; (7) *Even* every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.”

(John 10:15-18) “As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd. (17) Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

(Romans 11:26) “And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:”



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**Take a quick peak at Leviticus 23:22.** In Leviticus 23 Moses gives a much larger, more complete declaration of God’s law regarding these feasts.

(Leviticus 23:22) “And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not make clean riddance of the corners of thy field when thou reapest, neither shalt thou gather any gleanings of thy harvest: thou shalt leave them unto the poor, and to the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.”

**Even in requiring Israel never to gather all their harvest, the Lord is teaching us about his grace.** As Boaz left some handfuls of purpose for Ruth, so the Lord **God always provides for his own.** In the Old Testament, there was a remnant according to the election of grace among the Gentiles. The Lord said, “You take care that you provide for them.” In this gospel age there is still a remnant according to the election of grace. The Lord says, “You take care that you provide for them.”

In other words, the Lord would have us ever mindful of the needs of others, specifically of the fact that he has a people to whom he will be gracious; and he gives us the privilege of serving their souls’ needs by the preaching of the gospel.

**THE FEAST OF INGATHERING**

*“The feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field”* (v. 16), is the feast of tabernacles. This was a time when Israel was reminded that they dwelt in booths in the wilderness and God dwelt with them in the cloudy and fiery pillar. But it spoke of more than that. It spoke of that time when God came here and tabernacled in human flesh that he might at last bring God and man together in eternal glory and perfect fellowship, with sin and every evil consequence of it expiated, put away, purged, gone and forgotten forever!

(Psalms 72:16-19) “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. (17) His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. (18) Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,

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who only doeth wondrous things. (19) And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

(Revelation 21:1-7) “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God. (4) And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (5) And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (6) And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. (7) He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”

**THE EIGHTH DAY**

The eighth day was considered the great day of the feast of tabernacles (John 7:37). On the eighth day the harvest was completed. Everything was gathered. What a time of celebration it was! The joy of harvest and the shouting and dancing associated with the treading of the winepresses must have been something to behold. This gospel age is the eighth day of the feast, the last day there is. So I want you to turn to John 7:37, and hear the Son of God, as he speaks on this, the eighth day, the great day of the feast.

(John 7:37-38) “In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (38) He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

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**STRICT PROHIBITIONS**

Go back to our text in Exodus 23. Let me wrap this message up by showing you the very strict prohibitions given in verses 18 and 19. If we would worship God, we must worship him by faith alone, trusting Christ alone as our Savior. **No leaven of our works, no leaven of our righteousness can be mixed and mingled with the Sacrifice of our dear Savior’s blood and righteousness** (v. 18; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Galatians 5:1-4).

(Exodus 23:18) “Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.”

(1 Corinthians 5:7) “Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:”

(Galatians 5:1-4) “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

In verse 19 there is another strict prohibition that teaches the same thing.

(Exodus 23:19) “The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk.”

**We worship God by bringing to him that which he has given us, Christ the Firstborn, the Firstfruit, with no mixture of the idolatrous religious superstition of will worship.** That is exactly what is meant by the command, “*Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk.*”

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This remarkable prohibition is found three times in the Scriptures (Exodus 23:19: 34:26: Deuteronomy 14:21). God will have his people tenderly careful, guarding us from the idolatrous inventions of men in practices of barbaric human religion. As you know, the heathen around Israel were all idolaters. They practiced the most obscene and most ridiculous religious customs imaginable. It was common for them in their harvest feasts to seethe (boil) a kid in its mother's milk and then sprinkle their fields, vineyards and orchards with the liquid for "good luck" from their gods!

(Philippians 3:1-3) "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed *is* not grievous, but for you *it is* safe. (2) Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. (3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

- We dare not come before the holy Lord God empty.
- Yet, we dare not bring him any idolatrous mixture of our own making, of our own will and works.
- We come to God with the Sacrifice he has Provided: Christ Our Passover, — Christ the Firstborn! — Christ the Firstfruit!
- We have no other confidence. — "*Christ is All!*"

(Hebrews 10:18-22) "Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin. (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And *having* an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Amen.