

EXODUS 23:10-19 (SET TIMES AND FEASTS FOR ISRAEL)

Since Exodus 20 and the Ten Commandments, we have gone through nine sermons, including this one. There is a pattern which runs through those chapters which is quite remarkable. Yes, there are parallelisms and at least one chiasm, probably more. But there are also sets of tens within the major subjects we have looked at.

Bible scholar Ernest Bertheau discovered the patterns. These sets of tens continue right through to the end of Exodus 23. I haven't followed these patterns for the sermons because there are other aspects of the passages that I've been focused on, but I'd like to read you the main subject categories as he has laid them out.

Understand that each of these divides beautifully into ten individual points. It is really rather remarkable to see.

- a. Right of Personal Freedom - Exodus 21:1-11
- b. On Murder and Bodily Injuries. Sins against the Life of one's Neighbor - Exodus 21:12-27
- c. Injuries resulting from Relations of Property. Through Property and of Property. Acts of Carelessness and Theft - Exodus 21:28-22:6
- d. Things Entrusted and Things Lost - Exodus 22:7-17
- e. Unnatural Crimes. Religious and Inhumane Abominations - Exodus 22:18-22:31
- f. Judicial Proceedings - Exodus 23:1-9
- g. Rules for Holidays and Festivals - Exodus 23:10-19
- h. The Promises - Exodus 23:20-33

Today we will look at Exodus 23:10-19 and I will use his breakdown of it into ten separate ordinances so that you can see the pattern revealed. Some people love

patterns, some couldn't care, but they should at least be important to us for a significant reason.

If there are all of these patterns - parallelisms, chiasms, decades, and on and on in here, then either Moses was the most intelligent writer in human history, or these truly are the very words of God. It is beyond comprehension to think that one man could develop themes like this and also pack in all of the information that is both pictorial and prophetic that we keep discovering week after week.

What a priceless gem we have here! Let us ever appreciate it for what it truly is - God's precious word.

Text Verse: So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Colossians 2:16, 17

Today we will look at the ordinances for holidays and festivals. Each of these was given to Israel to show us pictures of Jesus. The nation lived out these pictures without even realizing it. And we are the blessed ones who can now see what was hidden from them.

These holidays and festivals are fulfilled in Christ and thus they are set aside. Paul tells us this. But we can still learn much from them. And so let's do just that! It's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Times of Sabbath Rest (verses 10-13)

The placement and structure of these verses is beautiful. The last set of verses, 1-9, dealt with justice towards others, and they had a strong focus on the poor. These verses deal with holidays, religious festivals, and set times of life, but even though they do, the first ones are named specifically in regards to the poor. Thus they make a transition between the two sets of tens laid out.

All of the verses are laid down intricately and with purpose. We have seen a chiasm which flows through them and we have seen how chapters 20-23 are developed based on patterns of tens as well. In addition, the patterns of tens overlap with a gradual melting together of each set of tens.

The Ten Commandments were laid out in Chapter 20 and then 8 sets of tens are laid out between Chapters 21-23. There is immense wisdom in the structure of these laws which have been given.

¹⁰ **“Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce,**

The first ordinance. Verses 10 and 11 comprise the first ordinance. It is divided into two sections, just as the week is. There is the prescription that work is to be done for the first six years - "You shall sow your land and gather in its produce."

This is a positive mandate to actively work the land, sowing and reaping, as it produces its harvest. This includes anything which the land produces, whether it is grains, fruits, or vegetables. The people were to work towards their rest.

It is, like the week leading to the Sabbath, a picture of man working six thousand years towards his rest during the millennium. It was to be a time of productivity

and diligence while waiting for a time of change in what is to be done. The land was given to them and it was to be used as they pleased and with the intent of producing wealth and prosperity.

¹¹ but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow,

The Hebrew verb for "let it rest" is *shamat*. This is the first of just 9 times that it will be used. It means "to let go" or "to drop down." The idea is that as one opens their hand and lets something fall out of it, so the people were to let the labors of the field drop out of their hands.

This word is associated with the noun *shemittah* which means "remission." That is used only 5 times, and only in Deuteronomy. As a noun, it signifies the year of release. The verb in this verse is the action of letting it be released.

During the seventh year, the cycle of sowing and reaping, or even just plucking what comes up without care, such as fruits on the tree, was to be completely disregarded. All was to remain lying fallow. And the reason for it is given...

^{11 (con't)} that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat.

The poor here in Hebrew is *evyon*. It means "needy," and this is the second time it is seen. The first was in verse 6 last week. This admonition follows directly and naturally after the verses of justice from last week, many of which dealt with the poor. Those who had no land or were destitute were given all the rights to whatever popped up from the fields during this seventh year.

Further, the beasts of the field could come in and eat anything which grew. The land was given over entirely to these two categories and no profit was to be made off of it for the owners of the land. Again, it is a marvelous picture of what we see in the six thousand years of man working towards the millennium.

Each of the redeemed has his own responsibility of sharing Christ. The care of the person and the field they minister in will reap according to their efforts. But, in the millennium - meaning the last thousand-year period where Christ reigns, there will be no need to minister as in times past. Isaiah describes what it will be like -

"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
³ Many people shall come and say,
'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths.'
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore." Isaiah 2:2-4

11 (con't) **In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.**

This is the second use of *zayit* or olive in the Bible. It hasn't been mentioned since Genesis 8:11 when the dove that Noah released returned with an olive branch in its mouth. Now it is reintroduced here. The offering of peace with man from the Lord is now expected to be an offering of peace to one's poor and needy fellow man. Thus it was honoring of the Lord who is the Prince of peace.

The vineyards and the olive groves would continue to put forth their fruits at a normal rate and so this would be an enormous blessing for the poor. In fact, with what they could harvest in this seventh year, if they were industrious, they could work their way entirely out of poverty.

Again, it is emblematic of the millennium where all will be able to receive the full benefits of what God offers as Christ rules from Jerusalem. This law of the year of rest is further defined in Leviticus 25:3-7 -

"Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; ⁴ but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. ⁵ What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, *for* it is a year of rest for the land. ⁶ And the sabbath *produce* of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, ⁷ for your livestock and the beasts that *are* in your land—all its produce shall be for food."

This seventh year where everything was to lie fallow was unique in all the world. It may have seemed contrary to what seems profitable, and in fact it may seem

that it would be harmful to the society to follow this mandate, but the Lord promised them that such would not be the case. Leviticus 25:20-22 shows this -

"And if you say, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?' ²¹ Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. ²² And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat *of the old harvest*."

Instead of focusing on the earthly, this year was to be different. They were given a command for a different focus, a spiritual one, for the seventh year. This is detailed in Deuteronomy -

"And Moses commanded them, saying: 'At the end of *every* seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who *is* within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, ¹³ and *that* their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.'" Deuteronomy 31:10-13

This law of the sabbatical year was given to show that the Lord was the Landowner and the people of Israel were His tenants. They were thus expected to conform to His laws and believe in His promises. During this seventh year, it is not said that they cannot work, only that they were not to work in harvesting.

If they wished, they could keep as productive as they wanted and earn as they saw fit, but they were not to violate the edict of letting the land lie fallow and not harvesting what came up on its own. The Lord was so adamant about this that in Leviticus 26, it is included among the curses of the people for disobedience -

"I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

³⁴ Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you *are* in your enemies' land;

then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

³⁵ As long as *it* lies desolate it shall rest—for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it." Leviticus 26:33-35

And because the people failed to obey, the Lord kept his promise for their disobedience. This is recorded in 2 Chronicles -

"And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21

If seventy years of exile equates to seventy violations of the observance of the sabbatical years, then they violated this law more than they kept it prior to their exile - for at least 490 of those years. It is a sad commentary on Israel that they failed to trust His promises and they failed to obey His precepts.

It is noted by later historians that after the exile observing this year became regular within Israel. Tacitus records the observance and Josephus notes that

Julius Caesar permitted the custom and excused the Jews from paying tribute in the sabbatical year.

However, with their rejection of Christ, following the law could never save them. They first disobeyed the law and were exiled, and then they rejected the grace of the Lord and were again exiled. They are well suited to be the poor of the land who so desperately need what the millennial reign of Christ will freely offer to them.

¹² Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed.

The second ordinance. The Sabbath which was mandated in the Ten Commandments is readdressed here to show that there is a system with purpose and intent. There is the weekly Sabbath, there is the sabbatical year, there will be a year of Jubilee which is an ending of seven periods of sabbatical years, and then there is the millennial time-frame of six thousand years leading to the last thousand years.

Within these occurrences are countless other dates which revolve around these set times. There is immense order and harmony in how God has laid out the redemptive workings of Scripture in the stream of time in which we live.

The word for "work" here is not the same as the word for "work" when the fourth command was given. Both are general terms, but this one is probably different in order to demonstrate that there was no exemption from the Sabbath week during a Sabbath year.

Also, there are two words translated as "rest" in this verse. The first is *shabbath* and the second is *nuakh*. The second gives the positive idea of resting and so to get the mental idea of what is being said, I will paraphrase this, "...and on the seventh day you shall observe the **Sabbath** so that your ox and your donkey may **rest** and be rested."

And after that a third word is used for "refreshed." It is *naphash*. This is a verb used for the first of only four times in the Bible. It is from a primitive root meaning to breathe; or passively, to be breathed upon. In this we could say, "...and the son of your female servant and the stranger may *catch their breath*." This unusual word again points us to the millennium of Christ. Peter says this to the people of Israel in Acts 3 -

"But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of **refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord, ²⁰ and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:18-21

The Greek words Peter used, *kairoi anapsyxeōs*, means exactly the same thing as Moses' words here; "times of recovering of breath, a refreshing." Each line continuously points us towards Christ and His work. The times of refreshing Peter speaks of is the kingdom age; the millennial reign of Jesus. Concerning this mandate in comparison to the Fourth Command, Charles Ellicott notes -

"Nothing is added to the requirements of the fourth commandment; but the merciful intention of the Sabbath day is more fully brought out—it is to be kept *in order that* the cattle may rest, and the slave and stranger may be refreshed."
Charles Ellicott

His words are correct, and again, they perfectly match what is expected during the millennial reign. It is a time of mercy on the world. What is stated here for the Sabbath is reflective of the millennium as Isaiah describes it -

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.

⁷The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

⁸The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.

⁹They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.” Isaiah 11:6-10

¹³“And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

This precept seems out of place considering what is supposed to be a ten-fold list of holidays and festivals, but it is not. It is to the Lord that these holidays and festivals were to be observed.

By prohibiting the speaking of the names of other gods, they were signifying that there is but one God who is to be acknowledged - Yehovah. However, there is the

modern Jewish practice of killing the Lord's name by silence. They do not speak His name, but rather refer to Him as Adonai, or "my Lord."

But the active speaking of His name and the refusal to speak the name of any other god is perfectly fulfilled in the millennial picture we have been developing. Throughout the world there are supposedly "many gods." But the words of Zechariah show us the fulfillment of this verse in Exodus 23 -

"And the **LORD** shall be King over all the earth.
In that day it shall be—
'The **LORD** is one,'
And His name one." Zechariah 14:9

Each verse has pointed to this marvelous time on earth which is surely coming soon to a millennial reign near you.

*A time of rest, it is what we hope for
A time when our labors will cease
And in Jesus, we have passed through the door
In Him is found our rest and our eternal peace*

*For those at the end of the ages
When the tribulation ends and wars finally cease
The realization of the rest promised in the Bible's pages
Will come upon them; they will behold the Prince of peace*

*He shall rule from Zion among Israel
And from Him the law will go out; disputing will cease*

*In that day, it shall all be well
As the world is granted its blessed time of peace*

II. The Pilgrim Feasts (verses 14-19)

¹⁴ "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:

The third ordinance. It is the mandating of three feasts to the Lord each year. Although the Passover and Unleavened Bread have already been mandated, this is the first mention of the three annual feasts in the Bible. The word "times" here is *regalim*, the plural of *regel*, or foot. Thus it means "foot beats."

Just as foot beats fall in regular succession, so these feasts were to be just as regular for the people. The word for "feast" is *khagag* which indicates a pilgrim feast. They were to travel to a set location for the feast. In this there is a vivid mental picture of "the foot beats of the pilgrim feast." Men would regularly travel to meet with the Lord.

¹⁵ You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt;

The fourth ordinance - *ha'matsowt*, or "the Feast of Unleavened Bread." It is the first of the three mandated pilgrim feasts. The feast follows immediately after the Passover and lasted for seven days. The first day and the last day of the feast were holy convocations, and for all seven days unleavened bread was to be eaten.

As noted when we looked at that feast when it was first mandated, it is a picture of our time in Christ. He died for us as our Passover Lamb. When we accept what He did, we enter into Christ and are thus deemed sinless before God.

We are, as Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 5, "truly unleavened." We were brought out of bondage to sin and the devil, pictured by Egypt, and now are the redeemed of the Lord, considered as sinless, pictured by the unleavened bread - meaning without yeast. The Lord is showing a picture of the redemption of His people through the mandated observance of this feast.

^{15 (con't)} **none shall appear before Me empty);**

The word "empty" is *reqam* - empty-handed or vain. The last time the word was used was in Exodus 3:21 when the Lord promised that Israel would not come out of Egypt empty-handed -

"So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go **empty-handed**." Exodus 3:20, 21

It seems that the use is intentional here. "Just as I brought you out of Egypt with hands that were not empty, so you shall come before me with hands that are not empty. To do so would be a vain thing." This seems certain because later in Deuteronomy, this mandate will apply to all three pilgrim feasts, but it is only noted as such with this feast now -

"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before

the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you." Deuteronomy 16:16, 17

For now, He is teaching them that what He has done for them is to involve like-return to Him when they appear before Him. This feast was to be held immediately after the Passover, from the evening of the 14th day of the month of Abib until the evening of the 21st day of the same month as is noted in Exodus 12:18.

¹⁶ and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field;

The fifth ordinance - *ha'qatsiy*, or "the harvest." This is the second of the three pilgrim feasts. It will also be called Shavuot, or the Feast of Weeks because it was celebrated seven weeks after another feast which will be mandated in Leviticus. It is held on the fiftieth day after that feast which corresponds to the fiftieth day after the first Passover when the law was received at Sinai.

In Greek, it is called Pentecost and thus it pictures the sealing of believers with the Holy Spirit upon belief in the work of Christ. There is the giving of the law at Sinai which is replaced by the giving of the New Covenant Holy Spirit. It is the indwelling of God in man.

The word for "firstfruits" is *bikkurim*. This is the first of 18 times it will be used in the Old Testament. It comes from a verb, *bakar*, which means "to bear new fruit, to constitute as first-born." This is referring to the wheat harvest which comes after the barley harvest.

The wheat was considered the more valuable grain and it is the grain which is used to refer to the redeemed of the Lord. Thus, this feast is a picture of those in Christ during the church age and who will be taken at the rapture. Paul speaks of this in Romans -

"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body." Romans 8:22, 23

Interestingly, what they were to bring when they appeared before the Lord is later mandated in Leviticus 23. There it says -

"You shall bring from your dwellings two wave *loaves* of two-tenths of an *ephah*. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. *They are* the firstfruits to the LORD." Leviticus 23:17

In one of only two times in all of the law, yeast, or leaven, was to be presented to the Lord. In this case, two loaves of bread baked with leaven. The loaves are a picture of all of the redeemed of the Lord, two loaves representing Jew and Gentile. This feast initiates the wheat harvest which continues on until the next feast.

The Lord was to receive them, even with leaven, just as the Lord has received us, both Jew and Gentile, even with sin in our lives. We are consecrated as holy and counted as sinless because of the work of Christ. The author of Hebrews also reveals the status of those in Christ as the consecrated firstborn -

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general

assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of Abel*." Hebrews 12:22-24

What Israel was asked to do at these feasts only pictures the greater work of Christ in redemptive history. Their regular lives as directed by the Lord, what they did, when they did it, and how they conducted themselves, was all given to show us so very much more concerning ourselves and our own life in Christ.

^{16 (con't)} **and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in *the fruit of your labors from the field*.**

The sixth ordinance - *ha'asiph*, or "the ingathering." This word, *asiph*, is used only here and in Exodus 34:22. When the feast is mentioned elsewhere, it is called Sukkoth, or Tabernacles. It is referring to the ending of the harvest season when the labors of the people are gathered in from the field.

The dating for this feast will later be fixed as the 15th day of the seventh month and it will last for seven days. This corresponds to around October on our calendar. There are various crops that grow in Israel throughout the summer months and by this time, they are almost all harvested.

Generally, the last crops to be gathered in are the grapes, figs, pomegranates, almonds, and olives. At the time when these harvests are accomplished, the people were to celebrate this feast as their labors for the year had come to an end. At the end of the instructions for the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23, this addendum is noted -

"Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD *for seven days*; on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. ⁴⁰ And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. ⁴¹ You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God." Leviticus 23:39-43

The Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled in Christ, He having put on a tent of flesh and dwelt among us. This pilgrim feast then is the fulfillment of the prophetic plan for man. After all of the harvests, all the redeemed who have been brought out of spiritual Egypt, the bondage of sin, will be gathered together to dwell with the Lord in the millennium.

There is an order to these three feasts. The Passover initiates the process - Christ's death for His people. The first feast is our position in Christ because of His work; we are counted as sinless. The second is the granting of the Holy Spirit because of that declaration of being counted sinless. And the third is the harvesting of the redeemed; the ingathering of the people of the Lord.

As this feast says, it is "at the end of the year." It is when the cycle is complete and the redemption of God's people is to be finally realized in its fullness. Although two of these feasts will be given different names later, they are given as a wide brushstroke here of what the Lord is doing throughout redemptive history.

¹⁷ **“Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.**

The seventh ordinance. Although this is similar to verse 14, it does have differences. The word for "times" is different. In verse 14, it was *regalim*, or "foot beats." Here it is *paam*, or "strokes." The word is elsewhere translated as "anvil." We get the idea of a regular stroke. Three times, or strokes, a year this was to occur as the times were set. The mental image we can make is that the foot beats of the people are to occur at the times when the anvil strikes.

Unlike verse 14, it identifies that it is the males who are to appear. This doesn't mean that women and children couldn't go, and the Bible records that they did, but it was obligatory for the males. In Deuteronomy 16, it presupposes that the entire family would go. It also identifies there what the term, "the end of the year" means for the feast of Ingathering -

"You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. ¹⁴ And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who *are* within your gates. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice." Deuteronomy 16:13-15

The end of the year means the end of the harvest cycle. Also, unlike verse 14 which said "a feast to Me," here it says they shall appear "before the Lord God." They were to recognize that it was to Yehovah, who is the God of Israel, to whom they were to appear. They were thus times of intimate meetings with Him.

One might think this wouldn't be a prudent thing to do. By all of the males observing these feasts, the land would be left defenseless. However, that involved faith in the word of the Lord, just as observing the sabbatical year did. In the explanation of these feasts in Exodus 34, this promise is included -

"Three times in the year all your men shall appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel. ²⁴ For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year." Exodus 34:23, 24

From here, the following three verses seem out of place and hardly in line with the holiday and festival requirements, but they are, in fact, logical and orderly. They reflect a portion of these feasts.

¹⁸ "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning.

The eighth ordinance. There is dispute as to what this verse means. Does it mean any sacrifice, or only the Passover. It is repeated in Exodus 34 with only a few differences. There it says -

"You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven, nor shall the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover be left until morning." Exodus 34:25

In these two verses, the blood is the object of what is offered instead of the sacrifice - "You shall not offer the blood." As the Bible says that the life is in the blood, and because grain offerings were considered separate offerings than sacrifices, it is referring only to the Passover, which is a type of Christ's cross. Thus it is called, "My sacrifice."

Leaven was to be completely purged from the home prior to the slaughtering of the Passover. Thus it is a picture of the sinless Christ who shed His blood for us. There was no sin to be found in Him, just as there was no leaven to be found in the homes of those who partook of the Passover.

The second half of this verse is incorrectly translated. The word translated here as "sacrifice" is *khag*. It is a completely different word than in the first half, *zebakh*. This word, *khag* means "feast," not "sacrifice." Thus the KJV and the NKJV get a demerit in their translations.

The lamb is "My sacrifice," and the Passover is "My feast." It is a feast to the Lord, and there was to be nothing left of the lamb by morning time. That was explained in Exodus 12 -

"You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire." Exodus 12:10

This verse then corresponds to the first of the three pilgrim feasts. The Passover is tied directly into the Feast of Unleavened bread. Again, each verse has been used to direct us to Christ. He is the object and fulfillment of every precept we have looked at today.

¹⁹ The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.

The ninth ordinance. The word "first" is translated a few ways - the first, the best, the beginning, etc. The word is *reshith*. It means the first, either in place, time, order, or rank. What it is referring to is the first to mature. Before any grain was harvested for self, the first harvested was to be offered to the Lord without delay.

The offering is that which was specified for the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost mentioned above. It was the first of the harvest which was to be brought to the Lord in the form of two loaves made with yeast. Interestingly, in the New Testament, there are two mentions by Paul of the firstfruits of those from Achaia. The first is mentioned in Romans 16:5 -

"Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ."

The second is in 1 Corinthians 16:15 -

"I urge you, brethren—you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia..."

Epaenetus is believed to be a Jew. The name is the same as the Hebrew "Judah" or "praise." And so it is believed he used his Hebrew name among the Hebrews and his Greek name among the Greeks as often happened in those days. Stephanas was a Gentile.

More interestingly, the name Achaia where they were both from has the same general meaning as the Hebrew name of Egypt. Egypt or *mitsrayim* is a plural word which means "double distress." Achaia means "grief." These are called the Firstfruits of Grief. They are a picture of the first redeemed out of the world of grief, just as Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, or double distress.

These then show the fulfillment of the two loaves of bread with yeast being presented to the Lord at this feast, Jew and Gentile. Returning the firstfruits to the Lord is a picture of the firstfruits of the redeemed being noted as such in the New Testament. This verse then corresponds to the second of the three pilgrim feasts. The offering of the firstfruits is tied directly into the Feast of Harvest.

***19 (fin) You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.**

The tenth ordinance. As the previous two precepts were tied into the first two pilgrim feasts, then it is logical that this is tied into the final pilgrim feast, that of ingathering. This verse is one of cleanliness and what is acceptable for holiness to God.

We know this because all of verse 19 is repeated verbatim in Exodus 34:26, but the second half of it, meaning this portion about boiling a young goat in its mother's milk is also repeated verbatim in Deuteronomy 14:21. That section of Deuteronomy is dealing specifically with clean and unclean meat.

It is true that this verse is one of mercy and respect rather than contempt of God's creatures, but there is much more to it than that. It is accepted that this command refers to an ancient superstitious practice which came at the close of the harvest season.

The people would boil a kid in its mother's milk. After that, along with magic rights, the milk was used to sprinkle plantations, fields, and gardens in hopes of them being more productive the next year. This then reflects those at the end of the age who refuse to give up magic practices. This is seen in these words from Revelation 9 -

"The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. ²¹ Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts." Revelation 9:20, 21 (NIV)

As the Feast of Ingathering deals with the final gathering in of all people after the tribulation period, then it is an admonition for those who are to be considered cleansed and acceptable for entering into the millennium. We know this is after the tribulation, because this feast comes after the grape harvest, the harvest of wrath. But this is what it says after that terrible time on earth -

"Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Revelation 20:6

Those who missed the rapture and enter the tribulation need to reject the mark of the beast in order to be saved. Instead of following the unholy practices which this rite pictures, they will become holy because of their faithful witness, even to death.

As you can see, the entire passage today pictures redemptive history from the time of Christ's cross at the Passover, right up until the time of the millennial reign of Christ. What Israel observed in picture, Christ fulfilled in Person. And we are the benefactors of all of the good which is promised.

By a mere act of faith in the finished work of Christ, our names are written on heaven's scroll. We will be saved out of the terrible time to come upon the earth and we will reign with Christ forever. Now is the time of God's favor, today is the day of salvation. If you have never made a commitment to this wonderful Lord who has done everything necessary to secure you a place in heaven, let me tell you how you can, even right now...

Closing Verse: "Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in You,
Whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage.

⁶As *they* pass through the Valley of Baca,

They make it a spring;
The rain also covers it with pools.
⁷They go from strength to strength;
Each one appears before God in Zion." Psalm 84:5-7

Next Week: Exodus 23:20-33 *How to maintain with the Lord sound relations...*
(Covenant Promises and Expectations) (64th Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Pictures of Redemptive History

Six years you shall sow your land
And gather in its produce as is normal to do
But the seventh year, please now understand
You shall let it rest and lie fallow as I so instruct you
That the poor of your people may eat, as to you I now tell
And what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat as well

In like manner you shall do
With your vineyard and your olive grove too
Six days you shall do your work in which you are blessed
And on the seventh day you shall rest

That may rest your ox and your donkey
And the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed
And in all that I have said to you
Be circumspect and make no mention
Of the name of other gods, this you shall not do
Nor let it be heard from your mouth, be sure to pay attention
Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year
To Me you shall come; to Me drawing near

You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread
You shall eat unleavened bread seven days
As I commanded you; yes as I have said
At the time appointed in the month of Abib, following in My ways
For in it you came out of Egypt, you see
None shall appear before Me empty

And the Feast of Harvest, of your crop's yield
The firstfruits of your labors
Which you have sown in the field
And the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year
At the time when the ground does yield
When you have gathered in what does appear
The fruit of your labors from the field

Three times in the year all your males shall appear
Before the Lord God, to me they shall draw near
You shall not offer the blood
Of My sacrifice with leavened bread
Nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning
You shall do this according to all that I have said

The first of the firstfruits of your land
You shall bring into the house of the Lord your God
You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk
Do follow my instructions as if with them you had been shod
Wonderful pictures of Christ and His work for us
Are revealed in these set times and feasts of Israel
Every word shows us more hints of Jesus
And of His marvelous works each does tell

Thank You, O God, for such a wonderful word
Thank You for the mysteries which are hidden there
Each that we pull out speaks of Jesus our Lord
Thank you that in His goodness we too can share
For all eternity we shall sing to You our praise
Yes, from this time forth and for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...