



The Festivals Outline God's Plan

by Randall Ricker

The founder of SpaceX and Tesla Motors, Elon Musk, is quoted as saying this, "Our existence cannot be about solving one miserable problem after another. There needs to be a reason to live." He took that in the direction where he needs to have his own space program and eventually send people to Mars, etc.

We know there needs to be a reason to live. Our overall purpose is to be part of God's family. The festivals of God help us to understand that.

God has a plan for humanity to be part of his family, and it is shown by the Holy Days. That's why it's so important to keep God's holy days. We do something that is commanded, but also they show us so much.

A Summary of the Festivals

Let's look at what they are. The Sabbath is a holy day. And we have the annual Sabbaths, the festivals that come once a year.

We're going to give a summary. First we will list the festivals and what they mean. Then we will go back and study each one, and give a proof for what we're saying about what they mean.

Leviticus Chapter 23, starting in verse four, "4 These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover." The 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar is the Lord's **Passover**, and that festival tells us that Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins, reconciling us to the Father. We will go through the proof of that in a little while.

Continuing in verse six. "6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8... The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it." The **Days of Unleavened Bread** teach us we must work at putting sin out of our lives, sin being represented by leavening during that week.

And then the **Feast of FirstFruits**. Leviticus chapter 23, verse 15. "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. 16 Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD." This is also called Pentecost. Pentecost means to count 50. "17 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." This firstfruits holy day teaches us that there's a firstfruits harvest, and then a later harvest, with the firstfruits harvest the people being called now, and others to be called later. It also tells us that we will have the power to put sin out of our lives by being given the Holy Spirit.

Then the **Feast of Trumpets**, verse 24 of Leviticus 23. "24 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. 25 You shall do no customary work on it...' " This Feast of Trumpets tells us that Jesus Christ will return at the last trumpet, and those firstfruits who've been called will be resurrected at that time as well.

Then the **Day of Atonement**. Verse 27 "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement [to make at one]. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, ...28 And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God." Atonement is to make one or make at one with God. The Day of Atonement pictures putting away of Satan the devil, the one who causes so much of the evil in the world.

Verse 34 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles [temporary places to live] for seven days to the LORD. 35 On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.'" The **Feast of Tabernacles** represents the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth.

Continue in verse 36 "On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation,... It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it." This is the 8th day, also called the **Last Great Day**. It involves judgment for all those who have not yet been called to a relationship with God, still to be called at that point. God doesn't leave anybody out.

Now let's go through the Biblical Holy days one by one.

Passover

Matthew chapter 26. 19 "So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. 20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve." They were celebrating the Old Testament Passover.

Remember the story of the Passover where the Israelites were being held in slavery by the Egyptians. The Egyptians, would not let them go, even after God put nine plagues on them. Finally, the 10th plague was the death of the first born of Egypt. God killed the first born of Egypt and passed over the Israelites. That's why it's called Passover. They ate a lamb that night, and they put the blood on the doorposts to signify that they were the Israelites and that they should be passed over.

Jesus Christ and His students were celebrating Passover. Verse 26 "26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission [forgiveness] of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in

My Father's kingdom.” Jesus changed the symbols of Passover from the lamb to bread and wine.

This ceremony at Passover shows our acceptance of Jesus Christ’s shed blood for the remission or forgiveness of our sins.

Romans 3 reminds us that we have all sinned. Romans 3:23 “23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation [payment] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,” We have to admit we have sinned by breaking God's law. The payment was by His blood accepted by us through faith. Christ paid the penalty for our sins. The wages of sin is death, it says elsewhere. Christ is our Creator. His life was worth more than all humans put together, so He could pay that penalty with His life. It is wonderful that God the Father would give his only Son to pay the penalty for our sins and reconcile us to Him.

Days of Unleavened Bread

In the Old Testament the Days of Unleavened Bread were to remind the Israelites that God had brought them out of Egypt, out of Egyptian slavery.

But then the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, writes about a feast with unleavened bread.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 “6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

There was a feast of unleavened bread still being kept by New Testament Christians.

Paul wrote that during the Days of Unleavened Bread leaven (which means yeast or other ingredients to puff up a baked product) represents malice, a desire to harm others. It also represents wickedness, which is practicing evil.

Unleavened bread spiritually represents sincerity, which is the opposite of hypocrisy, and it represents truth.

We must put the spiritual leaven out of our lives, a life-long process.

This is the second step after we start the process by accepting Jesus Christ’s Passover sacrifice to reconcile us. After that we must start putting sin out of our lives.

Firstfruits

This is also called Pentecost. In many parts of the country there is a firstfruits harvest and a later fall harvest. The firstfruits harvest might be in springtime, or in some parts of the United States, it might be into the middle of summer. Later there would be a larger

fall harvest. The same thing works with the way people are called to a relationship with God. We see it from the Bible, but we also just see it from experience. We can see that only a relatively small percentage of people are called now. Most don't even know the name of Jesus Christ, much less being called to a relationship with Him. We realize that not everybody is being called right now. Some are called now, and some are called later. It has been going on for 6000 years. In the Old Testament, just a few prophets were called to relationship with God, who had God's Holy Spirit. The New Testament Church has been a comparatively small number as well.

Acts 2:1-4 "1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance."

This is the Holy Spirit first being given to the Church, the power. This is the power to enable speaking other languages as would be necessary at times. But it is also the power put the sin out of our lives, to overcome sin.

The process is given little bit later in Acts chapter 2, verse 38.

On that day of Pentecost, after the students of Jesus Christ received the Holy Spirit, Peter gave an inspired sermon ending with this:

Acts 2:38 "38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The process is to repent (to change one's life, change your life to where you're going around the other way) and then be baptized (to be immersed, picturing our faith in Jesus Christ's, death, burial and resurrection).

This remission of sins is the forgiveness of sins. Then you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to continue, the power to grow and overcome.

The word firstfruits is used in the New Testament in James chapter one.

James 1:17-18 "17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. 18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."

He wrote, "we." James is writing to the Church, so the Church is to be a kind of firstfruits, as I mentioned.

The first fruits consisted of the prophets of the Old Testament and those who followed in their footsteps. God used them for his purposes. They suffered to live God's way, to record His words, and to point the way for us.



Feast of Trumpets

What's the greatest event in the Bible that's associated with the trumpet? The return of Jesus Christ! The 7th trumpet is sounded in Revelation 11:15 "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'".

The trumpet sounds, Jesus returns, and He takes control of things. He'll then rule forever in a way that we've never had such a good government before. He has perfect love, and that is how He'll be ruling.

There's more to it pictured by the Feast of Trumpets. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

"51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The people who have lived with Christ's Holy Spirit, grown and overcome to the end of their lives will be resurrected. Those who are still alive, who have God's Holy Spirit, will be changed at the 7th trumpet when Jesus Christ returns.

It's called the first resurrection in Revelation Chapter 20.

Revelation 20:4 "4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

These are people who may have been martyred or may have just given their lives to God. It says they lived and reigned with Christ for 1000 years.

At the Feast of Trumpets, we think of Christ coming back, and Christians being changed or resurrected, and then they will live and reign with Christ.

Revelation 20:5-6 "5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 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."

Day of Atonement

You can read about that in Leviticus 16:29-31 "29 This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls [to fast], and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells

among you. 30 For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. 31 It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.”

We read about unusual ceremony that occurred on the Day of Atonement in Old Testament times, going back to Leviticus chapter 16 verse 8. Leviticus 16:8-10
“8 Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. 9 And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. 10 But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.”

This scapegoat in the original Hebrew means Azazel, which is a word for Satan the devil. He is the one causing all the evil on the world. They were to let it go into the wilderness. That pictures Satan being sent into the wilderness as we see in Revelation 20. Revelation 20:1-3 “1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.”

The goat in the Old Testament ceremony represented Satan being put away for 1000 years during reign of Jesus Christ on the Earth.

Feast of Tabernacles

The reign of Jesus Christ on the earth for 1000 years is pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles. We call it the Millennium, meaning 1000 years.

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called Feast of Ingathering. It's important to know that, because it helps us further understand what it represents. Exodus 23:16 “and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.” During the Millennium, the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ, all nations will be gathered to salvation, but presently most are not called yet.

Isaiah 66 talks about gathering. Isaiah 66:18 "For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory." God has not get gathered all nations and tongues, and they've not seen God's glory. That's a time in the future.

As we read in Revelation 20, Christ will reign for 1000 years. Revelation 20:6 “...but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

It is the 1000 year reign on the earth, the Millennium pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles.

Last Great Day

The last Holy Day is the 8th day in Leviticus 23, which we also call the Last Great Day in John 7. We will see why we like to call it the Last Great Day. John 7:37-39 "37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Up to this point in God's plan shown by the holy days, we have seen where God has offered his Holy Spirit to a few Old Testament prophets, the New Testament Church, and the people who will have lived during the Millennium. What about those who lived during the 6000 years before the Millennium starts, but were not called to a relationship with God?

We see that the Last Great Day, also called the 8th day of the feast, pictures their chance for salvation in John 7 that we've just read. Christ is talking about a time when anyone could come to Him. That's not the case now right now. Right now we see that nobody can come to Christ unless God calls them. It will be different during the Millennium and during a judgment period, after the Millennium, pictured by the Last Great Day. Then everyone will be offered God's Holy Spirit pictured by living water.

We read about that judgment period in Revelation 20. Revelation 20:11-12 "11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

This is the second resurrection. We already read that the first resurrection occurs when Christ returns. Here is another resurrection. The dead small and great stand before God. It talks about books being open. The books of the Bible are open to their understanding for the first time. They have a period of time to get the understanding, to live with that understanding, show God what they're going to do, and then they're judged according to their works.

In Ezekiel chapter 37 we see that it is a physical resurrection. It is not like the first resurrection, where it is a spiritual resurrection to eternal life. In Ezekiel 37, it all looks very physical. Ezekiel 37:1,10 "1 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones... 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army..."



As you read all the verses, you see that they are talking about starting with bones, and then soon parts of the body come back on the bones. Then he says breath comes into them, and they stand up on their feet.

Verse 13 "Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves." Realize that people will be brought out of their graves with physical bodies..

Verse 14 "I will put my Spirit in you, and you shall live..." They will have God's Holy Spirit for the first time. "and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.' "

People will be brought up out of the grave, given God's Holy Spirit, and live for a period of time. They will prove to God what they're going to do with the Holy Spirit. If they do well, they will be given eternal life.

We see now that those who never understood the Bible or received God's Holy Spirit will be raised from the dead and given the same chance for salvation that everybody else had. By the end of the Great White Throne judgment, represented by the 8th day or the Last Great Day, all will have the opportunity to become members of God's family. God demonstrates through his plan for mankind that He is fair and just and merciful. His festivals show that all people who ever lived will have their time to truly understand Him. They will be given the opportunity for eternal life. It is a beautiful thought that illustrates the awesome love that God has for each and every one of us.