

Doctrinal Studies

Biblical Concept of Feasts

Levitical feasts are taught in Leviticus 23. The word “feast” is the translation of the Hebrew word *chagac* in Lev. 23. This word is also used to translate the Greek word *ἑορτή* (*heortes*) in Matt. 26:5; Luke 2:41; and Col. 2:12. The Hebrew root (*chag*) means to dance or be joyous. The feasts were designed to produce happiness and relate that happiness to the message of God. They were intended to commemorate the grace of God and express the blessings that come from a right relationship to God’s plan for the life of the individual.

The feasts were related to Israel and its agriculture:

- The Passover was held during the time of the barley harvest (the latter rains)—Lev. 23:4, 5.
- The Firstfruits was held during the time of the wheat harvest—Lev. 23:9–14.
- Pentecost was held when the early figs became ripe—Lev. 23:15–22.
- The feasts of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23–25), Atonement (Lev. 23:26–32), and Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34–44) were held during the early rains or the time of planting.

The Bible presents the First Advent feasts:

- The Passover represents the Cross—John 6:4; Lev. 23:4, 5.
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted a week and represents fellowship with God in time—Lev. 23:6–8
- The Firstfruits depicts the Resurrection (always on Sunday)—Lev. 23:9–14.
- Pentecost was a warning of discipline to the Jews (50 days after Firstfruits)— Lev. 23:15:22

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There was a period of time that elapsed between the first four feasts and the last three. This is a representation of the Church Age—there are no feasts from roughly June to October.

The Bible presents the Second Advent feasts:

- The Feast of Trumpets depicts the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the end of the Church Age at the Rapture—Lev. 23:23–25.
- The Feast of Atonement represents the Second Advent of Jesus Christ at the end of the Tribulation and the reconciliation of Israel to God— Lev. 23:26–32.
- The Feast of Tabernacles shows the one-thousand year reign of Jesus Christ over a restored earth— Lev. 23:34–44.

John 10:22 refers to the Feast of Dedication, which is an independent celebration of the Jews—rather like the 4th of July to us. This feast was first celebrated on December 25, 164 BC when the Temple was cleansed as a result of Judea winning its independence from Syria in the Maccabean War.

What we should remember is that although all of the Levitical feasts had a special significance, there is no spiritual growth that can result from observing these feasts. Col. 2:16–17 says, *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."*