

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #8

Holy Days of the LORD

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Welcome. May the Lord of the Sabbath bless you today, on His Sabbath day.

Today we are going to consider more deeply the subject of holy convocations and worship that is pleasing to God. We are going to look at exactly what holy convocations God commanded. We will investigate whether God specified a time, a place and a purpose for each one? This was God's custom as He introduced group worship to both Abraham and Moses which was pleasing to Him.

Then we will turn our attention to what holy convocations Christians are commanded to keep? This may shock you. It certainly did me.

Let's start our study with what God said about holy convocations. We find them first described in Leviticus 23: 1-2:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.'"

You just can't escape or dismiss God's command and intention here. God is calling these "My feasts." The children of Israel are to proclaim "His holy convocations." There is absolutely no doubt that these are God's feasts to be kept by Israel.

And, it is clear why Israel was to keep them. They acknowledge that God miraculously redeemed Israel from its exile and slavery in Egypt. The chosen people of God were brought to the Promised Land by God's mighty hand. And, at Mt. Sinai, the people were given the Ten Commandments as the basis for a marriage covenant between Him and them, in their land and for their nation; all called Israel.

And, God also gave Moses the Torah, the first five books of the written Bible, which dealt with ALL the commandments, laws, statutes, ordinances and teachings that Israel would need to observe as His special people. Included are aspects of civil law for government and the ethical conduct over and among God's people. More important for this study, and the Lord of the Sabbath Program, is the ceremonial worship law for Israel's conduct toward the God who married and loved them.

So, what are God's feasts which identify the holy convocations commanded for the people of Israel? First is the weekly Sabbath, on the seventh day of each week. This is absolutely clear. Read it for yourself in Lev. 23: 3:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a

holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.

Notice how this re-emphasizes the Fourth Commandment already given at Mt. Sinai. After six days of work, on the seventh day, the people were to rest from all work in their dwellings AND have a holy convocation for group worship. This probably entails traveling to a public meeting place, or to someone's home on the Sabbath.

Since the seventh-day Sabbath is referred to as a feast day of the LORD, it is common for groups holding a holy convocation to also have a meal together on the Sabbath. Sharing a meal is a great time for fellowship usually following a group worship activity during the holy convocation. It is not unusual for this meal to be one of the best meals of the week. It is planned that way and adds to the joy typical of any "festival."

Can you grasp the mercy and grace of God in this commanded feast of the weekly Sabbath? Even though we have all been cursed by the sin of Adam and Eve, and men must labor to survive in this cursed world, God still mercifully gives us one day each week when we can rest and draw close to Him and His people in a festive and joyful day. Praise God! Thank you God for loving us and being kind to us while we are still sinners.

There are three ANNUAL feasts to be observed by Israel. They are commanded in Exodus and Deuteronomy besides in Leviticus. They are no minor matter to God. It is clear what the general purpose of these feasts is. We find one of the best descriptions of God's intent in Ex. 23: 14-17:

Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year. 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; none shall appear before Me empty); 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. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.

First, note that these three annual feasts of the LORD are kept by Israel TO God. This is no different than the weekly Sabbath of the LORD. It is the Sabbath of the LORD and to be kept TO the LORD.

However, while the weekly Sabbath can be kept at home, or with a small group wherever you live, ALL males must appear before God for these annual feasts. Where was God then? Where did they need to go to appear before God? The answer is simple. God was literally present on earth in the Tabernacle or Temple. And, the Temple was built in Jerusalem. So, the men of Israel were commanded to travel to Jerusalem three times a year to observe these three feasts. They are called "pilgrim" feasts for that reason. From other texts, we see these men of Israel could also take their families to the feasts.

When they came to the feast, the men were not to appear before God "empty?" What

does that mean? If you think you know, get your scriptures together and contact me. Perhaps we can use your explanation during a future program?

Attached to these three feasts of the LORD are the commanded holy day convocations. There are seven annual holy days noted. Isn't God marvelous? Seven is an important number to God. It goes with a completion of work---in this case worship work. We see it in His creation "days" and in the week (Biblical and secular) which commemorates for every man God's great work of creation. Remember though, from our very first Program, relatively few men alive today see the connection that God revealed by His Spirit.

In the Feast of Unleavened Bread (often called the Feast of [the] Passover), in the spring of the year, we find the first two holy day convocations of the LORD. We can read this in Lev. 23: 4-8:

These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. 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. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; and you shall do no customary work on it. But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.

Did you spot the LORD'S holy days during this feast? On the fifteenth day of the first month is a commanded holy convocation void of customary work. And on the twenty-first day of the first month (the seventh day of the feast which began on the fifteenth day of the first month) is also a holy convocation---the first and the last days of the feast. Is it a coincidence that Jesus also claimed to be the first and the last?

Note two other things. There is no holy convocation commanded on the fourteenth day which is called the LORD'S Passover. And, it is NOT part of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is a day before the feast, important as a day of preparation, and very special to God and Israel, but it is not a feast itself, nor a day for a holy convocation.

Also note that there is something to do each day for the men observing the feast. They are to eat unleavened bread each day. They are also to present offerings to the LORD made by fire each day. But, only on the first and last day are they commanded to also meet with others celebrating the feast for a holy convocation.

Note that regarding proper observance of the holy convocations, we are told the precise day (fifteenth and twenty-first days of the first month), the place (Jerusalem) and what the males are required to do (eat unleavened bread and make offerings).

We had found in earlier programs that God always gives us the details for proper worship before Him which pleases Him. He tells us when, where and what the worship is that

pleases Him. He usually explains the why of them too; but not always. Explanation is often found in a different text than the instructions he gives us for what we are to do to keep the feasts and holy convocations to Him in a proper and pleasing way.

So, when is the next commanded holy convocation of the LORD? It is during the Feast of Weeks. Now, most Christians recognize the word “Passover,” and some may know of unleavened bread, the flat “Jewish” bread known as “matzo” found in stores especially around Passover/Easter in the spring of the year. But, very few Christians can explain, or even recognize, the term Feast of Weeks.

What is astonishing here is that this holy day has been part of the celebrations of the church body of Christ Jesus for a couple thousand years. Many Christian Churches still celebrate it as Pentecost Sunday.

Every Christian should be well aware of it and its importance to God, and to Jesus. This is the day Bible scholar’s claim the church of Jesus began. It was on the day of Pentecost that Peter spoke boldly at the Feast of Weeks in Jerusalem. It was the day the disciples spoke in tongues. It was the day the Holy Spirit of God was poured out over the assembly with tongues of fire above their heads and there was a sound of a great rushing wind. It was a day that 3,000 souls were added to the church of Jesus, the Christ.

Here is what the LORD says about this holy day in Lev. 23: 15-16:

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 complete. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

This is where the reference to Pentecost comes into Church history. Pentecost means a count to fifty. This holy day is unique in that you are to count the days leading to it. It is the ONLY holy day of the LORD where a numbered day of a month isn’t specified. However, we can see that fifty days after the spring feast would put us in the summer.

Here again we also see a prevalence of the number “seven” in God’s worship laws, where seven Sabbaths are to have expired before Pentecost. Within fifty days, regardless of what day of the week one starts the count; you will always find seven Sabbaths.

We can see the command for a holy convocation in Lev. 23: 21:

And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generation.

Here again, we find a specific day for a holy convocation combined with the command to do no customary work in your dwelling on that day which can facilitate the holy convocation with other people of God. Notice the statute is “forever.” As long as there

are Israelites, this is God's command. There were Israelites at the time of Jesus. He was an Israelite, of the tribe of Judah, clearly a Jew. So, we should not be surprised that about a week after Jesus had ascended into heaven, his disciples and Apostles, who were also Israelites, would be gathering on Pentecost (a feast of the Jews) for a holy convocation. If God's commanded assemblies had been nailed to Christ's cross and abolished, it surely is strange that Christ's apostles would still be keeping the Feast of Weeks.

With time flying by, I am not going to give the "what" the people of God were to do regarding the Feast of Weeks. It is pretty long and is covered in Leviticus 23. Instead we will move forward to the last feast of the Lord, the Feast of Tabernacles or also called the Feast of Ingathering. This feast is late in the fall of the year, before what we would consider the season of winter. It is the end of the sacred, holy-day year and at the end of the growing season in the land of Israel when all the fruits of the land would be gathered into their barns and storehouses. Associated with the Feast of Tabernacles are the other four commanded holy convocations of the LORD.

On the first day of the seventh month of the sacred year, God commanded a holy convocation. We see it in Lev. 23: 23-25:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "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. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.'"

This day is known by many names but is often called the Feast of Trumpets. It would be better rendered as the Day of Blowing (Trumpets). It is not one of the three feasts of the LORD, and not really even part of the third annual feast. It is an important day leading to the third feast and is a commanded day for a holy convocation.

Another day often well known as a holy day of the Jews is the Day of Atonement. The command is found in Lev. 23: 26-32:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. 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. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath."

Here our God again gives the day, the duty and the place for this holy convocation. The prohibition on work is stricter than the other annual holy convocations. It is more like the

restriction on ALL work for the weekly Sabbaths. Combined with the command to afflict your soul, this holy day has typically been treated as the most sacred and introspective of the holy days to be observed by Israel. It does not fit conceptually with the idea of a feast or festival. It is a day of fasting and no food preparation work is needed like on the other holy day convocations.

But, moving ahead, we get to the third feast of the Lord which contains one holy convocation described in Lev. 23: 33-35:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.”

So, we see the third feast with its one holy convocation and its rest from customary work. We have uncovered six annual holy convocation days to be observed to the LORD related to His three feasts given to Israel. And, we see this use of “seven” by God with two seven-day annual feasts and, sandwiched between them, a feast of seven weeks! Add to these the weekly Sabbaths of God on the seventh-day of the week. God has His ways that we have a hard time grasping unless someone points out these things to us. Our God is an awesome God!

But, one of the most interesting holy convocations commanded by the LORD is the last one of the year. It, sort of like Passover, is not actually within the three feasts. Passover is an important day just BEFORE the feasts of the LORD start. And the Eight Day is an important day just AFTER the feasts of the LORD end. These special days are sort of like book ends!

Let’s look at what God commands about this last holy day of the LORD. It is found in Lev. 23: 36:

For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.

Man, I would like to talk about this day right now. It is so awesome in its meaning. It has built me up like no other holy day convocation that I observe during the year. Each year, I long for this last, great holy day of the LORD!

But, the truth is that the meaning of each of these three feasts, and the seven holy convocations, can fill many of the weekly *Lord of the Sabbath* Programs. God is trying to tell us something good with them. If not, why would he put so much Scripture in the Old AND the New Testaments about His holy days and our worship of Him on them?

I had intended, when I started, to discuss the keeping and meaning of these Holy Days to

Christians. I can see there is nowhere near enough time left today to do that. It is a big and important topic. So, instead, I am going to dedicate the entire next program to that subject so I can do justice to it.

For now, a summary or conclusion is in order concerning the LORD'S given feasts and holy convocation days. Instead of just my summary, why not let the LORD, our God, give His own summary first? After He had given His seven holy days in Scripture, we find Him speaking in Lev. 23: 37:

These are the feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day---besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the LORD.

Note that all the feasts and holy convocations of the LORD also required offerings by all males even if you make many voluntary offerings. Have you ever noticed that in many of our Christian Churches, the females far outnumber the males coming to appear before the LORD? Isn't it strange and contrary to what God seems to have intended in commanding all males worship before Him? Something seems amiss in our worship today.

These holy days are appointed times for the people of God to appear before their God. And they should not come empty before Him. Are you going to ignore an appointment that God said He made with you or come before Him empty? I surely will not.

Note especially that these ARE the feasts of the LORD. While they were given to Israel, they are NOT to be understood as Israel's feasts. This would make no more sense than to claim that because the Sabbath was given to Israel as the Fourth Commandment, the weekly Sabbath is exclusively Israel's Sabbath. Is the Fifth Commandment about honoring thy father and mother something only Israel is commanded to do?

No. No, dear friends. It is clear from the lips of Jesus. He declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. And, that the Sabbath was made for man. As the being who spoke all things into existence, we can believe that Jesus, as the Word of God, knows He spoke the Sabbath into existence also. He knew when it was made---at creation for man, and that He did not make man for the Sabbath.

If we believe Jesus, it is clear that Israel, like all men, were to keep the Sabbath. If the Sabbath was made for all men like Jesus said, I believe it was made for me too; AND for YOU. I hope you will follow Jesus, as obedient sheep, hearing His voice and believing what He said. I hope you too will start to keep the Sabbath holy. Contact me if you are uncertain about this. We can talk about it in love.

I also keep the annual holy convocation days of the LORD. But, I do not believe that I am a child of Israel. So, I don't keep them exactly the way Israel was commanded to

keep them. And, the truth is neither do the Jews of today keep them as originally commanded.

When Jesus came, He showed us a different way---a better way to live and to worship before God. It is His way that we must learn and follow to be one of His sheep to whom He gives eternal life.

This is Brother Kenny wishing you a wonderful six-days of productive work until the next Sabbath arrives and we can be together again in rest and worship.