

The Feasts of the Lord

This article examines the Christian Festal Year. Christians of a certain age, and especially those who are members of the Church of England, tend to assume that because they grew up with the festivals laid down in the Book of Common Prayer and are more-or-less familiar with them, that these are the Christian festivals. Most people who have any knowledge at all of the Church Year will tell you that Christmas and Easter are the highlights of it, and even people who never otherwise got to church at all will sometimes make an effort, even these days, to attend church on one or other of these festivals. Far fewer however could tell you much about any other Christian festivals, though there are many more in the Prayer Book.

Advent, Christmas, St Stephen, St John, Innocents, Circumcision, Epiphany, Septuagesima, Sexagesima, Quinquagesima, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Rogation Sunday, Ascension Day, Whit Sunday, and Trinity Sunday.

For all I know there may still be a few hardy souls in the Church of England who actually know what all these mean or refer to, and some perhaps will even know what an Ember Day is? However I have yet to meet anybody in any of the large number of non-conformist churches who ever made any particular fuss about, for example, Rogation Sunday; and the Roman and Orthodox churches have a large number of additional saints' days all their very own. So the question I am asking here is: - "Which of all these various festivals did God actually institute, and which therefore does He expect His people to observe?"

Does God require us to attend church at Christmas and Easter, or is it optional? Does He also require our presence at, say, Epiphany? Or Whitsun? And what about all those fearsome Orthodox saints? Does God actually require us to be in church on St Athanasius' Day? Or St Gregory's? Or on the feast of St Prepostera the Rigorous? (Well ok, I made the last one up, but you get the picture.) If He does, why then don't the clergy say so and insist that we attend? (To be honest some of the Roman clergy do, especially of the older generation; but the C of E has become pretty lax about such things, as about much else). If God expects us to observe all the festivals in the Prayer Book, why don't the clergy say so? But if he doesn't, why are they there at all? Are they for real or aren't they?

The answer will probably depend upon whom you ask. A Roman priest will tell you that "Holy Church is God's authority upon earth, so it's the festivals of the church of Rome which God requires us to observe, and we are to attend Mass on those days or else be in danger of Purgatory". Even if the Roman doctrine is wrong, at least they know what they believe. An Orthodox priest, Greek or Russian, will tell you that the traditions of the church have all come down to us from the early Fathers, and whatever they observed we should too. It's difficult to say quite what an Anglican will tell you these days because they don't all say the same thing, but there would probably be a majority grouping around Christmas and Easter with a few traditionalists adding some or all of the others listed above from the Book of Common Prayer. But as for the many non-conformist churches (Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Brethren, Pentecostal, or the large number of non-denominational house churches) I think that few if any would tell you that God actually requires our physical presence in any church on any of the festivals from the list above, although in practice most of them hold some or other sort of special service or meeting themselves at Christmas and Easter.

It's a bit of a muddle, isn't it? Who is right? And very much more importantly, what does God Himself want from us?

Before going any further we must get clear about the matter of authority.

There have been Christians in England since the last years of the Roman emperor Tiberias, which is to say that the first Christians arrived in England between 33 and 37 AD, and there is ample written, and even monumental, corroborative evidence of this.¹ There was then of course no Pope of Rome, or of anywhere else, nor anybody who presumed to bear papal authoritarian rule over Christ's own flock - that right belonging to the risen Christ alone - so we must ask ourselves the question "Which festivals did Christ lay down for His disciples to observe?"

And of course the answer is slightly uncomfortable, for it's "None of the Above". He didn't lay down any festivals at all. Or at least, He didn't make any changes to the festal year observed by the Jews, which He Himself had kept during His years on earth.

So where did all the "Christian" festivals come from?

For the most part they were laid down by the Romano-British emperor Constantine in the third century, with various saints' days added as men and women were martyred for their faith in Jesus, and the Christians who had known and survived them gathered for prayer in their memory on the anniversaries of their martyrdom. The plain unvarnished truth is that not a single one of the festivals we think of today as being "Christian" actually originated with Christ Himself. They

¹ For example, the British monk Gildas mentions it as being common knowledge in his day.

all originated with other men, and most of them with just one man who happened to rule the Empire some two hundred years after the events of the New Testament. Not a single one of them originated with God. It remains true today, as it was in the first century, that the only festivals of divine ordinance are the festivals of the Bible, which had their origin in the days of the Old Testament and continued in use into the first century AD. When Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed by famine and fire in AD 70 with much horrific loss of life, all the sacrifices ceased. Then, with no Temple in which to celebrate them, the feasts themselves fell into disuse (though the memory of them was retained by the Jews of the diaspora, who developed a theology of atonement without sacrifice which enabled them to this day at least to meet at their synagogues in annual symbolic and rather sad re-enactments of the glory which once had been).

But it's always a mistake to look only at the earthly side of Biblical events and ordinances. Why did God ordain the festal calendar He gave to Moses? What was the purpose of all those gatherings in Jerusalem three times each year? With the benefit of hindsight we can certainly see that the whole festal year pointed forward to Yeshua Ha Mashiach - our Lord Jesus Christ - and was designed to prepare the nation for His coming, and I suppose also that outstandingly faithful and obedient Jews such as King David and the prophets were to some degree aware of that.

But there was another very immediate and practical dimension to the feasts. They were the days of God's judgments upon lands and people. Why was it that three times every year all males had to present themselves before the Lord in Jerusalem? Because the festal days were days of God's reckoning with His people. No king can rule by remote control. Every king must perforce meet with his people at regular intervals for several reasons: to receive from his people what is due to him, to apportion amongst his people what is due to them, and to do justice between them in matters of dispute. These are the fit and proper functions of kingship, and God is the King of all kings. The festal year was structured after God's own pattern to serve God's own purposes in ruling God's own people. Yes, the Hebrews were supposed to understand that the pattern pointed forward to the coming of Christ, but that was only part of the picture. The basic purpose of the feasts was that they performed an essential role in God's government of His people. They were days of judgment, and it is my submission that they still are. For God has never abdicated His right to judge, nor has the need of judgment vanished from the earth, nor has God forgotten the festal system by which His annual judgment days are set.

"Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD." (Exodus 23:14 - 17)

There were seven feasts in the Mosaic festal year, ordered into three groups so that some of them ran consecutively.

Passover and Unleavened Bread	Early Spring
Firstfruits	Pentecost (50 days after the 1 st sabbath of Unleavened Bread)
Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, and Ingathering ²	Autumn

Now I can hear already somebody saying "But surely all these were done away with when Jesus came. Didn't He fulfil all the demands of the law by His one sacrifice for sin, once offered? And anyway, how could we all possibly go to Jerusalem three times a year now? It's simply not possible. All these Old Testament feasts passed away once Jesus had come. They were part of the Old Covenant, and we have a New and better covenant now, in the Blood of Jesus."

Indeed we do. And just as certainly there is no need for any further sacrificing of animals, which were never able actually take away sins anyway. All these were subsumed into the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice of the Lord Jesus upon the cross of Calvary.

But that doesn't remove the on-going necessity for God to judge people on a regular basis, for that's the way He runs His kingdom. A moment's thought will show that the alternative would be to maintain that God has nothing to do with affairs on earth these days and has walked off the stage, at least until the second coming. That point of view would be a self-evident nonsense, but if we reject it (as we should) we must perforce answer the question "What does God actually do on earth now?"

In the book of Revelation we are given a clear picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as King of heaven and earth, and a very active and intervening King He is too, handing down judgments of a kind to make the strongest of men tremble. He rules all nations with a rod of iron. He has countless angels at His command who go to and from between heaven and earth about His business; and from time to time He Himself comes down to see things for Himself and to give orders to His servants. Just because the Temple sacrifices have ceased it doesn't mean that God has abandoned the world to its own devices; quite the opposite in fact. The Lord Jesus is the best ruler there is. He is the consummate manager of events and people, and His judgments continue every year at their set times exactly as they have always done. We know when the judgments are set because we are given the dates each year in the Bible. The Biblical calendar is not the one we commonly use today (we should be in less of a muddle about some things if it were) but with a bit of practice we can get

² Nothing here about Ember Days or Rogation Sunday is there!

used to it, and when we do we find growing within us a curious sense of the rightness of it. It actually *feels* better and more satisfying than the Babylonian-cum-Roman calendar we have used since the time of Julius Caesar. But because so few Christians today know anything about it I'll give here an outline of the main details of God's calendar.

1. The beginning of the year isn't in January, it's in the Spring.

This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. (Ex 12:2)

Which month was that?

It was the month of Abib³ which means "sprouting" or "green ears". (Ex.13:4)

Sprouting of what?

The Barley and the Flax, the two crops of which had sprouted, grown up, and been destroyed by the judgmental hail storm in Egypt just before the exodus, leaving the Wheat and the Rye to come up later that year (Ex.9:31,32).

Therefore the moon of Abib which begins the festal year, is:-

The New Moon which occurs after the sprouting of the Barley and Flax, and before that of the Wheat and Rye.

The vernal equinox, which is used by modern Jews to date the Passover and by the tables for finding Easter in the Book of Common Prayer, has absolutely nothing to do with it and never did, and is nowhere even mentioned in scripture. Because of its astrological and polytheistic cult system Babylon concerned itself with such things, but Moses absolutely did not.

It follows that the dates of historical festivals given with reference to the Biblical calendar cannot be converted with precision to our modern calendar unless we know for certain when the barley and flax sprouted that year. And still less can the dates of the festivals for future years be determined, as is done today in Israel, because who knows what next year's weather will bring? Sometimes Spring occurs early, sometimes very late. This should serve to remind us that in everything we do we depend upon God, but of course it doesn't. Men still insist upon being independent of Him.

It seems to me that God set this method of determining the beginning of the festal year in order to give Himself the flexibility to govern the world from year to year according to His will and justice. He specifically allowed Himself some latitude each year in the timing of His judgments (being always more ready to forgive than to condemn, and looking always to find ways of sparing His people if only they will repent and amend their ways) by the simple expedient of varying the weather from place to place around the earth. It is the blessings and cursings of God which govern all events on earth, so God in His infinite wisdom has allowed to Himself the necessary flexibility for good and just government, whilst keeping His people to a strict timetable of observance of His judgments delivered at the feasts. (Of course any man who was so foolish and rebellious as to disregard God's government and judgments upon him, and who failed to appear at Jerusalem to be judged, put himself thereby also beyond the covenant of mercy and was treated as a heathen.)

Now God's judgments did not cease with the coming of Jesus. On the contrary, the scope of them increased to cover the much larger number of souls on earth who now, having believed in Him, comprise His people. Whatever else may be unclear in the book of Revelation one fact stands out mightily: Jesus is now the King of kings and rules the world. Everything that happens here now happens because Jesus ordered it, and that includes warnings and judgments. The One who now sits upon the throne of judgment is our Lord Jesus Himself, and every year at the set times He takes His seat and the cases of nations, churches and individual men and women come up before Him, whether they like it or not, and indeed whether they know it or not. This is why the judgments of God occur in the earth at regular intervals, spaced apart by the festal periods which He Himself ordered of old and has never rescinded. The rabbis of Israel taught from experience when each judgment was actually put into effect (there are days allowed for repentance and appeals for mercy) and the Christian may learn much to his profit if he reads carefully and avoids falling headlong into the leaven of the Pharisees (though the Jews have ever been secretive towards the Gentiles, and the habit didn't automatically cease even when faith in Christ had made some of them one in Him with some of us. To this day, rabbis do not normally communicate their knowledge to gentiles). But with the Bible as our guide we can discern something of God's dealings with the world today.

We have seen that Abib, the month of sprouting, begins the year. Here are the names of all the months:-

³ The first month was named Abib (Aviv) before the exile to Babylon. After the return it was called by the Babylonish name Nisan, which of course removed the link to the spring sprouting. Abib is by far the more ancient, and better, name for the month.

Pre-exilic	Post-exilic	Approx. modern months	Scriptural references
1. Abib	Nisan	March-April	Ex 13:4, 23:15, Neh 2:1
2. Zif	Iyyar	April-May	1 Ki 6:1, 37
3. Sivan	Sivan	May-June	Est 8:9
4. Tammuz	Tammuz	June-July	
5. Ab	Av	July-August	
6. Elul	Elul	August-September	Neh 6:15
7. Ethanim	Tishri	September-October	1 Ki 8:2
8. Bul	Marheshvan / Heshvan	October-November	1 Ki 6:38
9. Chisleu	Chislev / Kislev	November-December	Neh 1:1
10. Tebeth	Tevet	December-January	Est 2:16
11. Shebat	Shevat	January-February	Zec 1:7
12. Adar	Adar	February-March	Est 3:7
13. 2nd Adar (7 of 19 years)		March 14,15	

The beginning of each month is the day of the new moon (whence "moonth"). However as anybody will know who has ever looked for it, a new moon is frequently invisible. That is firstly because it is between the earth and the sun and is therefore un-illuminated on the side which faces us, and secondly because its small angular distance from the sun means that the sky is usually too bright with sunlight for us to make out the disc, faintly illuminated as it is then only by earth-shine. On the evening following a new moon a sliver of the edge of the moon may sometimes be seen, but then of course only if the western part of the sky is free of cloud. Typically in England the sky is seldom free of cloud when you want it to be, and a new moon is often not glimpsed until it's a few days old. The Jews in Jerusalem had much the same difficulty. However for them it was a serious problem because the Law specified particular sacrifices on the day of the new moon, and the Temple authorities had to devise some way of getting it right. Accordingly, a good meal and a night's lodging were laid on every month for any man who, living sufficiently near to Jerusalem, would get on his donkey, travel into the city, and testify before the council that he had seen the new moon. In default of a sighting by the council, the evidence of two reliable witnesses was always considered the best means of establishing the day. However if nobody at all had seen the new moon the authorities had to fall back on calculation, and in such cases the new moon sacrifices were typically repeated on the following day as well just to be on the safe side.⁴

Nevertheless, once somebody had seen the first new moon after the barley had sprouted, the year's feasts could be determined easily by anybody, the only requirement being the ability to count up to seven (even Pentecost was just seven times seven, plus one). Then as now perhaps, arithmetic was not everybody's strong point, but most people had a sufficiency of fingers for this. Complex priestly computations based upon star gazing were certainly not needed.

2. The whole Festal Year was contained in the seven months following Abib⁵

Exodus 34:18-23

The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt. And thou shalt observe,

the feast of weeks, of **the firstfruits** of wheat harvest, and

the feast of ingathering at the year's end.

Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

The most solemn feast of the year was the last. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh ha Shannah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Feasts of Tabernacles (Succoth) and Ingathering are grouped together in the autumn and run consecutively. This three-week period contains the last judgment of the year when God passes sentence upon His own people, which sentence determines whether their future will be blessed or cursed. The people are alerted by the blowing of trumpets, and judgment is then given upon every man's life and work. After the Day of Trumpets come ten "days of awe" during which men have time to reflect and repent. Then on the Day of Atonement, the last and great day of the feast, a day of fasting and affliction of soul, the judgment is fixed and cannot afterwards be changed.

The week of Tabernacles follows, in which the people build booths (or tents, or tabernacles) roofed with leafy branches, and from the fifteenth day from the Day of Trumpets they live in those booths for a week to reflect upon the journey in the wilderness and, by extension, the transitory nature of this life as a whole. This period runs concurrently with the Feast

⁴ Witnesses who had delivered their testimony satisfactorily were called publicly with a loud voice to "come up hither", to a high tower from which a trumpet would be blown to announce the beginning of the new moon.

⁵ In the appendix I have given the Biblical texts in full, taken from the AV.

of In-gathering somewhat akin to the Harvest Festival celebrated in English churches, but of course speaking chiefly to us of the great harvest of souls which will take place at the end of this age in which angels will be the reapers (which hoped-for event I cannot remember ever being even mentioned in a modern English parish church)!

3. So what of Today?

Well, the Temple in Jerusalem is no more. There has been a change of covenant, and therefore a change of the priesthood by which the new covenant is mediated to men. The priesthood of Levi has been superseded by the priesthood of Melchizedec.

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

And it is yet far more evident. For that after the similitude of Melchizedec there ariseth another priest Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For he testifieth, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec". For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, for the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope [did], by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest (for those [Levitical] priests were made without an oath, but this [man] with an oath, by him that said unto him "The Lord sware and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec"). By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. (Hebrews 7:11-22, *emphasis and parentheses mine*)

We who believe in Jesus have one priest, and only one.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 2:5)

We who believe in Jesus have no need of earthly priests ordained by men for we have an heavenly priest ordained by God, by whom the power of an endless life is mediated to us. Not only so, but we ourselves are all priests who are of His calling, who worship God at His heavenly altar, and bear His Name before a world which knows Him not. Who also,

... as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

The Levitical priests offered up sacrifices of bulls and goats; but we offer up sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, with which, if we are obedient and faithful to Him and not just mouthing words, God is better pleased.

So then, as the Levitical priesthood has long ago been superseded by Messiah's priesthood, are not the Biblical feasts all now done away with too?

No, they are not. Paul says,

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Col. 2:16,17)

Notice that Paul says that holy days, new moons and sabbaths *are* a shadow of things to come, not *were* a shadow. Paul did not consider the holy days of the Lord to have been abolished.

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor.5:7,8)

Neither does Paul say to the Corinthians "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, so we can now forget the feast"; he says "therefore let us keep the feast". It is still the case that God sits in judgment upon us, but He does so now by Jesus, who is seated upon the highest throne of heaven. The Lamb who was slain is now alive again, and to Him has been given all authority in heaven and earth. A human being, the man Jesus, now rules the universe! The worlds move at His command who upholds all things by the word of His power. Not a kingdom rises, nor a tower nor even a sparrow falls, but by His command. And His sessions are still those which He ordained in 1528 BC at Sinai in Arabia.

My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (Psalm 89:34)

That is why the judgments which we now see coming upon the world in these last days coincide with the Biblical feasts (at least, we see that when we observe the feasts according to the commandments of God, and not according to the imaginations of men). There is still some debate about the exact timing of a judgment session. It is as yet unclear to me whether a session begins at the precise moment of a new moon, or at the moment when a new moon (typically about 30 hours later) first becomes visible. I incline to the former and the rabbis to the latter, but I could be wrong.

However, here follows a short list of some recent judgments. In the column headed FEAST I have given the name of the appropriate feast calculated by noting the first new moon after the sprouting (in England) as nearly as I have been able to judge it, and DAY refers to the day of that feast. I do not currently have access to a field of barley so there is room for error here. I do the best I can. Likewise, sprouting does not occur everywhere simultaneously even in the same Spring, and Spring in one country isn't necessarily Spring everywhere else. The following table is a work in progress, not a definitive list, and the reader is warmly encouraged to compile and maintain his own.

DATE	MONTH	FEAST	DAY	EVENT
5 May 2008	Sivan	Pentecost	-6	10,000 killed by a cyclone in Burma
30 April 2009	Sivan	Pentecost	1	The UK Daily Telegraph was handed details of MPs' expenses. The subsequent press exposure shook Parliament to its roots, many MPs were forced to resign, and some were prosecuted. The Speaker too was deposed for the first time in 300 years.
14 April 2010	Abib	New Year	1	Volcanic eruption in Iceland closed European airspace for a week, and a simultaneous earthquake in China killed an uncounted number of people.
20 April 2010	Abib	New Year	7	An explosion beneath a BP oil rig off the Louisiana coast triggered the worst environmental disaster in American history.
28 April 2010	Abib	1 st Fruits	1	UK Prime Minister Brown was accidentally recorded insulting a pensioner, the TV coverage of which contributed significantly to the subsequent fall of his government.
16 June 2010	Sivan	Pentecost	1	BP was made to pay \$20 billion for a cleanup operation in the Gulf of Mexico.
18 August 2010	Av	(not a feast)	9	Iran began loading fuel into its first nuclear reactor (see below).
11 January 2011	Tebeth	see (ii) below	8	The summer sun rose 2 days early in Greenland! No good explanation yet for this.
12 January 2011	Tebeth	see (ii) below	9	Severe and widespread flooding began in N.E. Australia.
11 March 2011	Abib	New Year	7	Magnitude 8.9 earthquake in Japan. The tsunami left an estimated 30,000 dead, a dangerous nuclear situation, and the Japanese economy at a standstill.
19 March 2011	Abib	Passover	1	A French military aircraft opened fire on Col. Gaddafi's troops, beginning a six-month NATO operation which has resulted in regime change in Libya.
10 July 2011	Av	(not a feast)	9	Murdoch was forced to close his News of the World newspaper after 168 years of its publication. Then, having been publicly humiliated, he was forced to abandon his bid for the BskyB network, which was a huge financial disaster for him. See (v) below.

(i) It is not yet clear to me whether the festal year begins in the same month in all countries? Sprouting depends upon the weather and God is sovereign, ordering all things so that the innocent do not suffer with the guilty.

(ii) It is taught by the rabbis that the judgments of Yom Kippur take effect on or about 8th - 10th Tebeth.

(iii) There are characteristic judgments upon the people of God (at Trumpets), the enemies of God (at Passover), and upon the crops, trees and rain (at Pentecost & Ingathering).

(iv) The 9th Av is not a feast day at all, but is rather a day of disaster and great horror for the Jews, whose oral tradition has it that it was on this day that God delivered His judgment upon the faithless scouts who brought to Moses and Israel an evil report of Canaan (Ex. 13:25 - 14:38, and see Numbers 13 & 14). It was on or about this day that both the first Temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's troops in 502 BC and the second Temple was destroyed by Titus' army in 70 AD. On 9th Av in 132 AD the Romans crushed Bar Kochbar's rebellion and turned Jerusalem into a Roman city, killing a hundred thousand Jews in doing so. It was on this day in 1290 that King Edward 1st expelled all Jews from England (until Oliver Cromwell set aside the decree), and on 9th Av 1492 all Jews were expelled from Spain and its territories. On 9th Av 1914 the first world war broke out, setting the world's political stage for the second world war in 1939, during which war six million Jews perished at the hands of Hitler. On 9th Av 1940 Himmler announced the Nazis' "final solution", and on the eve of 9th Av 1942 the mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto began, and the gas ovens of Treblinka and Auschwitz began their fell work.

(v) More recently (and it has not been much publicised) Rupert Murdoch is a Jew on his mother's side, and he is also one of an international group of faithless but temporarily powerful Jews (such as Henry Kissinger) who like to think they control world events. It is against such Jews as these that God delivers His judgments on 9th Av. What will follow from the loading of Iran's nuclear reactor on 9th Av 2010 remains to be seen, but it doesn't look good for modern secular and faithless Israel. Nevertheless, faithful and believing Jews and their families (such as were Caleb and Joshua, and the early believers in Jesus who remembered His warnings and fled immediately to Pella when they saw the holy city beginning to be surrounded by armies) have nothing to fear.

"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12:4-7)

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15)

And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:44)

1. Unleavened Bread

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: **it is the LORD'S passover**. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread. (Ex 12:1-20)

2. Firstfruits of Wheat (= Weeks, i.e. to Pentecost; not the ingathering at the end of harvest)

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days⁶; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD. And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savour unto the LORD. Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings. And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. 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. (Lev 23:10-22)

3. Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles, and Ingathering.

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your

⁶ Hence Pentecost - fifty days. Not a mandatory appearance in Jerusalem, but important. Paul was anxious to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost.

generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD. (Leviticus 23:23 - 44)

NB: Not the feasts of Israel, but **The feasts of the Lord.**

It is not the purpose of the gospel to make us all good Jews. But neither is it to cause us to forget who is in charge, and how He rules His kingdom.