

A Survey Through

The Book of Ruth

Ruth to Jesus
As Seen through the Levitical Feasts of
Israel

Mike Butler
Southside Baptist Church
Second Edition
2024

Ruth to Jesus
As Seen Through the Levitical Feasts of Israel
An Eight Week Survey

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Why Study Ruth?

- An understanding of the Old Testament is critical to understanding the Bible
 - But it is particularly important for our understanding of Jesus
- As Jesus Himself said:
 - ***“ 25. Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26. Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” 27. And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:25-27 NKJV - Underline Added)***
 - In other words, the entire Old Testament, “*...all the Scriptures...*” point us to Jesus
- And as Phillip recognized:
 - ***45. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45 NKJV - Underline Added)***
 - Phillip knew Jesus was the Messiah by what was written in the Old Testament
 - But can you...?
- We need to understand that the Old Testament and New Testament as one story - The Story of Jesus
 - The Book of Ruth illustrates this through its beautiful Messianic prophecy
 - So much so, Warren Weirsbe calls the book “*The Gospel According to Ruth*”

How We Will Study Ruth

- Eight weeks only allows for a very high level survey
 - Each participant will be offered a copy of the lessons to read on your own
- Week 1 - Introduction and Overview of Ruth
- Week 2-8 - The Seven Feasts of Leviticus chapter 23 and their prophecy of Jesus
 - Week 2a - The Feast of Passover
 - Week 2b - The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Week 3 - The Feast of Firstfruits
 - Week 4 - The Feast of Pentecost
 - Week 5 - The “Pause”
 - Week 6 - The Feast of Trumpets
 - Week 7 - The Day of Atonement
 - Week 8 - The Feast of Tabernacles and Recap

The Book of Ruth

Week 1

Introduction and Overview

Sitting the Stage

- Ruth is a love story - As one commentator said, *“What Venus is to statuary and the Mona Lisa to painting, Ruth is to literature.”*
- It is the story of endurance and faith
 - From the down-trodden to the uplifted
- A story of redemption
 - From stranger to friend
 - And from sinner to saint
 - It is a beautiful picture of salvation through Christ our Redeemer
- Ruth is a direct connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament
 - Through our study of Ruth we will reference: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Judges, 2 Samuel, Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians, Romans and Revelation
- The story takes place during the time of the Judges (1375-1050 BC)
 - When, **“...there was no king in Israel: everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”** (Judges 21:25 NKJV)
 - A time of great disobedience in Israel (see Judges 2:11-19)
 - When a great famine spread throughout the land.
- Ruth is part of the “Megilloth” or “Five Scrolls” (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes and Lamentations)
 - It is part of the “Ketuvim” (the Writings), which when combined with the “Torah” (the Teaching) and the “Nevi'im” (the Prophets) make up the “Tanakh”, the Hebrew Bible and our Old Testament
- The story takes place in two locations: Bethlehem in Judah, Israel and Moab in modern day Jordan
- Main Characters:
 - Elimelech:
 - From the tribe of Judah. The tribe into which the Messiah was born. His name in Hebrew means *“My God is King”*. Husband of Naomi and father of their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. He was a relative of Boaz and a landowner. Elimelech's desire to escape the troubles of life points to a crack in his spiritual armor and a lack of trust in God. But his mistake was used by God to achieve His intended results.

- Naomi:
 - The wife of Elimelech and the mother of Mahlon and Chilion. Her name in Hebrew means "*Pleasant*". She would become a widow with two unexpected daughters-in-law; Orpah and Ruth who would also become widows. Through Naomi we will see great love, and yet for a time, a failed testimony.
- Mahlon:
 - The son of Elimelech and Naomi, whose name means "*sick*". He married the Moabite Ruth and died in Moab (Ruth 4:10)
- Chilion:
 - The son of Elimelech and Naomi whose name means "*pining*". He married the Moabite Orpah and died in Moab.
- Orpah:
 - The Moabite wife of Chilion whose name means "*stubborn*". Through her we will see the consequence of mankind's greatest decision.
- Ruth:
 - A Moabite who married Mahlon, the son of Elimelech and Naomi. Her name means "*Friendship*". As a Moabite woman she would have been an enemy of Israel, but that would change.
 - Through her we will see a picture of the love God offers to every person; Jew and Gentile.
 - Ruth is mentioned 12 times in this book and nowhere else in the Old Testament. But, she is mentioned in the New Testament where Matthew includes her name in the earthly genealogy of Jesus. She is one of several Gentile women mentioned by Matthew. Most were foreigners and Gentiles who played a key role in the earthly lineage of the Messiah (Matthew 1:5 / Ruth 4:18-22).
 - Ruth reminds us of the faithful women of Proverbs 31
 - She reinforces the fact that even a seemingly unimportant person can play a great role in God's plan when we are obedient. In this case, Ruth played a part in God fulfilling His Messianic promise.
- Boaz:
 - A wealthy landowner of great stature in the community who becomes a picture of Christ the Redeemer when he offers to marry Ruth the Moabite (Ruth 4:1-12). This was allowed by law in order to maintain the lineage of the deceased.
 - Boaz' action to rescue Ruth as her "*Kinsman-Redeemer*" is a prophetic view of Jesus coming for the harvest of His bride from amongst the world - as the Redeemer of man, "***...And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also....***" (John 14:3 NKJV)

The Book of Ruth

Week 1 Continued

Overview

Brief Overview of Ruth

Ruth Chapter 1

- There was a severe famine in Israel
- To escape the famine, Elimelech of Bethlehem fled Israel with his wife Naomi and two sons
- His decision shows a lack of faith
 - Because they left the Promised Land for the land of Moab - Israel's enemy - A people of pagan idolatry (Zephaniah 2:9)
- They lived in Moab for ten years
 - During that time Elimelech died
 - And their two sons married Moabite women - Ruth and Orpah
 - This was against God's commandment (Deuteronomy 7:1-11 / 23:3-6)
 - Then the two sons died - Leaving all three women as helpless widows
- Eventually Naomi heard that God had relived the famine in Israel (Ruth 1:6) so she decided to return to Bethlehem
- It was a dangerous journey so she encouraged her daughter-in-laws to stay in Moab
 - But her testimony was flawed because she also encouraged them to return ***"...to her gods..."*** (Ruth 1:15 NKJV)
- So the girls had a decision to make - Accept or reject the opportunity to leave Moab
 - A picture of leaving their life of sin for a new life of redemption
- Orpah rejected - She stayed in Moab and returned to her god
- Ruth accepted - She went to Israel and accepted Naomi's God
 - ***"Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God."*** (Ruth 1:16 NKJV)
- Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem - Where Ruth was technically an enemy
 - They arrived in the spring - At the time of the early barley harvest
- Naomi was bitter and blamed God
 - But Ruth was accepted by the people

Ruth Chapter 2

- They arrived poor, so Ruth offered to glean in the barley field for food
 - Even though she was an enemy of Israel God's law allowed her to glean
 - Leviticus 19:9-10 / 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19-21
- There she met the landowner Boaz – Who had compassion on her
- Boaz offered her care and refuge - And he invited her to join his workers and family

Leviticus Chapter 23

The Connection Between Ruth and the Levitical Feasts

Naomi and Ruth arrived at the time of the spring barley harvest

- This was no coincidence, but was the providence of God
- The Lord has already made a provision for a stranger and widow to glean in the fields of Israel during the harvest (Leviticus 19:9-10 / 23:22 and Deuteronomy 24:19-21)
- The harvest is celebrated by seven feasts in Leviticus
 - Feasts that may at first appear to be simple agricultural events
 - But when studied through the lens of Biblical prophecy reveal a beautiful picture of Jesus
 - From Passover to Tabernacles
 - Redemption to eternity
- We will study each of these feasts in detail

Ruth Chapter 3

- Ruth the Moabite asked Boaz the Jew to redeem her life
 - This was allowed by Deuteronomy 25:5-10
- In doing so Boaz became her *“Kinsman Redeemer”*
 - And brought her from poverty to promise. As Jesus, our Redeemer, brings us from sinner to saint
- Boaz then provided her with care and food - more than she would need

Ruth Chapter 4

- So Boaz met at the gate of the city to negotiate his marriage to Ruth
 - Because there was another relative who first had to agree
- Boaz was granted permission to be Ruth’s *“Kinsman Redeemer”*
- So Boaz married Ruth and redeemed her to a new life - (symbolically born again)
- They bore a son, Obed - The father of Jesse
 - Jesse was the father of king David
 - David sat upon the eternal throne (2 Samuel 7:12-14 / Isaiah 9:7)
 - And was in the earthly lineage of Jesus - The ***“...Root of Jesse...”*** (Romans 15:12 / Revelation 5:5 NKJV)
- The Book of Matthew records Ruth the Gentile Moabite in the earthly genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-16)
 - This shows the gospel of redemption was always intended for the Gentiles
 - ***“6. Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”*** (Isaiah 49:6)

Week 1

Homework Assignment

Biblical View of the Harvest

During the time of the Judges famine spread across Judah. So a man from Bethlehem named Elimelech decided to flee his troubled nation to seek a better life in another land. But much like Lot, Elimelech sought refuge in the wrong place and for the wrong reasons (Genesis 13 /14 /19). He fled to Moab, the land of Israel's enemies and took with him his wife Naomi and their two sons. Then things took a turn for the worst. After settling in Moab their sons married Moabite women, which was against the commandment of God (Deuteronomy 23:3-6). Then Elimelech died, as did both sons, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth as widows. Elimelech's decision to leave Israel may have seemed right at the time. But in doing so he left God's land of promise in order to find refuge amongst God's enemies. This would prove to be a very poor decision.

In due time Naomi heard news that the famine in Israel had ended, but since she was in Moab she had been unable to witness God's miracle first hand. Even so, she decided to return to Bethlehem to see if she could find a better life amongst her own people. It would be a long and dangerous journey for anyone, but specifically for three unsupported widows. Two of whom would be foreigners in Israel and might not be accepted. So Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to remain in Moab where they had other family and could probably find a new husband. But in her efforts to physically help them she spiritually hurt them. Naomi should have encouraged them to go with her to Israel and accept the God of Abraham as their own. She should have led them away from sinful idolatry and an eternity in hell by leading them to the One and only God of Israel. But she didn't and the consequences of her urging would be tragic for one of them. Following Naomi's recommendation Orpah opted to stay in Moab where she would undoubtedly return to her pagan ways and worship false gods. Sadly, she was never heard from again. But the other daughter-in-law, Ruth, refused to return to Moab and insisted on going with Naomi to Bethlehem. But more importantly she made a profession of faith and accepted the God of Israel as her God.

The journey to Bethlehem was tough but Naomi and Ruth arrived to an excited crowd who welcomed them home. They were very happy to see Naomi, but undoubtedly saddened to hear that Elimelech and their sons had died. They were also intrigued by the young woman from Moab. A foreigner from an enemy land who unbeknownst to them would play a key role in the future of Israel and ultimately impact the course of human history. But for now something about Naomi had changed. Ten years of hardship and grief had taken their toll but the change affected more than just her physical appearance. Her attitude had changed as well. Naomi's name means "*pleasant*" but she asked her friends to call her "*Mara*", a name that means bitter. She felt that way because she thought she was being punished by God. Like people often do, she blamed her situation on someone else rather than accepting the consequence of her own sin.

When the two women arrived in Bethlehem they were poor and widowed with no support. So Ruth took the initiative and offered to glean the fields. This was a common practice for the poor and widows as they walked behind those harvesting the fields to pick up whatever scraps were left on the ground. But this simple task would become a key part of the story, because in hindsight we can recognize God's hand of providence when Ruth gleans in the field of a man named Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi through Elimelech, and a man of position and wealth. As an Israelite landowner he could have forced Ruth to leave. Yet rather than evict the young Moabite woman Boaz protected her and offered to provide for her and Naomi. In other words, he would redeem them despite the fact Naomi had turned away and Ruth was an enemy.

All of this was made possible because Naomi and Ruth arrived in the spring during the early harvest of winter barley. The time of gathering the first fields that had been sown earlier in the year. But their timing was not coincidence or good luck. It was the hand of God working through the details of several lives at once to achieve His intended purpose. It was the harvest that allowed Ruth to work in the field of Boaz, and as we will see, it was the harvest that tells an amazing story of how a stranger and an enemy of God can become a beautiful redeemed bride.

Now, let's go to the barley field and explore this amazing prophecy.

The Harvest

In Matthew chapter 13 is The Parable of the Sower. Here Jesus tells us about a farmer who casts his seed in several places. Some never grew because the ground is too hard, some seeds sprout but then wither away in the heat, some are overtaken by weeds and die, but a few take root, grow and produce fruit. The gist of the story is fairly simple. The sower is Jesus, or His followers, and the seed being sown is the gospel truth of His word. Most will deny it, some will listen but then walk away, but a few will allow it to take root in their life, grow and produce the fruit of salvation, **"...But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."** (Matthew 13:23. See also Mark 4 and Luke 8) The **"...fruit..."** is of course the salvation of those who accept the gospel and allow it to produce abundantly through our lives. But core to the parable's meaning is a significant event - the harvest. The time when the seed has germinated, grown and produced fruit that is ripened and ready to be gathered. The gathering, or harvest, is the outcome of the Sower's labor. The celebration of a successful crop of fruit the seed has produced.

So let's think about it this way...when we share the gospel message we are like a sower casting seed wherever we go. Some will listen, but not accept, others will simply walk away, but occasionally some will accept the truth, let it take root in their hearts and grow, mature, blossom and bear spiritual fruit. This leads to the harvest of our souls. The gathering of new lives produced by the seed of the gospel. But from a broader perspective the harvest represents the spiritual gathering of all believers produced across time, as seeds are planted, Christ is accepted and the body of Christ grows and multiplies. This is the process by which the gospel works, as it is sown, watered, weeded and grown until its fruit is gathered together with all who

are in Christ Jesus. Essentially, we are the crop of the coming harvest. The field of believers who yearn for the time when the Sower will come to gather His entire crop in the greatest harvest of all time, the Rapture, ***"...For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."*** (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 NKJV).

This harvest describes the gathering, or Rapturing, of those who accept the gospel of Jesus and become a believer. We are the fruit from the seed of truth who bring glory for God - the fruit of the Sower:

- ***"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'"*** (Matthew 9:35-38 NKJV)

In Matthew 9:38 Jesus calls Himself, ***"...the Lord of the harvest..."***. In essence that is His ultimate role as He fulfills God's sacrificial plan for redemption by applying grace for the atonement of sin, and then by gathering to Himself those who have accepted God's gift and grown in their faith, ***"...Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.'"*** (John 4:34-36 NKJV). Whether it was an animal slain for the sin of Adam, the first-fruit of Abel, the faith of Abraham, the lamb sacrificed in the temple or the Lamb of God sacrificed on the cross, they all represent the willingness of God to forgive sin through our acceptance of sacrificial atonement in Christ. But...the ultimate outcome of God's atonement, the ultimate outcome of the cross and the ultimate outcome of the Sower's seed is the harvest. Paul spoke of this gathering in Romans 8:23b NKJV. The time when we are ***"...eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."*** The ***"...redemption..."*** Paul is talking about is our gathering to Jesus. The harvest that unites us with our Lord. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 where he speaks of the harvest at the believer's resurrection, ***"...So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."*** (NKJV). This is the Rapture - the reaping and gathering of believers, when, ***"...in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet call. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*** (1 Corinthians 15:52 NKJV). This is the eventual harvest of God's people to His kingdom for eternity. The time Jesus anticipated when He said, ***"Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation***

of the world." (John 17:24 NKJV). It is the time Jesus was preparing for when He said, ***"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*** (John 14:2b-3 NKJV).

So given all this you might ask, what is the eventual outcome of the harvest? For that answer we turn to the end of God's word in the Book of Revelation. There we are told about the gathered crop made of all believers who will dwell with God after the final harvest is complete, ***"...And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."*** (Revelation 22:1-5 NKJV)

So in that broad context how does all of this relate to the story of Ruth? Well, let's go back to the Old Testament to find out.

- The Book of Leviticus provided the young nation of Israel with instructions for living in accordance with God's commands. As we know, it is our life lived out for Jesus that provides a testimony of Him to the world. Israel was no exception, but unlike us they did not have a complete Bible to give them guidance. So God established His expectations in several early writings that would eventually become what we know as the Old Testament. One of these instructional books was Leviticus which gave them specific instructions for how to live, but also priestly instructions for making offerings, and the requirements for observing specific times of the year to honor God through holidays and feasts. The chapter we're most interested in for our study is Leviticus chapter 23. There Moses describes seven feasts on the Jewish calendar that are to be observed at appointed times every year. On the surface they may appear to simply describe religious holidays and festivals, but with deeper study we begin to see that each one is also a prophecy of Jesus. Four of them have already been fulfilled but the last three will be fulfilled in the future. To truly understand their connection to Jesus we need to first understand that the entire Bible is the story of redemptive grace through the Messianic sacrifice. In fact, the Old Testament should help us recognize Jesus as the Messiah even if we didn't have a New Testament.

For example:

- In John chapter 1, we find the story of Phillip and Nathaniel when they first met Jesus at the beginning of His earthly ministry. Interestingly, even though they knew very little about Jesus at the time, they knew enough from Old Testament scripture to recognize Him as the Messiah...
 - ***"...The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found***

Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:43-45 NKJV).

- In the same way, when Jesus was walking on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection He met two believers who were upset because they thought Jesus had died. But when Jesus explained who He is He cited proof from the Old Testament,
 - ***"Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:25-27)***

From just these two passages we can clearly see how the Old Testament is a prophetic picture of the Messiah. So it should be no surprise that the feasts of Leviticus are prophecies of Jesus as well. We'll see this clearly as we work our way through a discussion of each one.

Understandably there are multiple views of how these feasts fit into prophecy, but for our study we'll lean towards the interpretation of conservative scholars, and specifically Daniel Fuchs' book *Israel's Holy Days - by Type and Prophecy*.

In Leviticus chapter 23 Moses outlines seven feasts or holy days that were to be observed by Israel. Each of these presents an offering to God and reflects on Israel's obedience to God's commands. But each one is also a Messianic prophecy that when viewed through the Biblical lens will show that some have already been fulfilled, but others await to be fulfilled in the future. So let's walk through the festivals of Leviticus 23 to better understand their purpose and connection to the story of Ruth, but more importantly, their fulfillment through the story of Jesus.

But... before we start, let me give you a tantalizing clue about how all of this relates to Ruth. Leviticus 23:22 is a verse that falls roughly in the middle of the description of the feasts; after the first four but before the last three. At first glance the verse appears to be out of place and seems to have nothing to do with the feasts at all, but as we dig a little deeper it's prophetic meaning will become clear:

- ***"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God."*** (Leviticus 23:22 NKJV)

Before we dig deeper into verse 22 let's quickly review a few facts about the seven feasts:

- The Passover
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Nisan
 - Spring: March - April
 - Leviticus 23:4-5
 - Fulfilled

- The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Nisan
 - Spring: March - April
 - Leviticus 23:6-8
 - Fulfilled
- The Feast of Firstfruits (of the Harvest)
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Nisan
 - Spring: March - April
 - Leviticus 23:9-14
 - Fulfilled
- The Feast of Pentecost (also, The Feast of Weeks)
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Sivan
 - Spring: May-June
 - Leviticus 23:15-21
 - Fulfilled
- Pause: Leviticus 23:22
- The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Tishri
 - Fall: September - October
 - Leviticus 23:23-25
 - Future Fulfillment
- The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Tishri
 - Fall: September - October
 - Leviticus 23:26-33
 - Future Fulfillment
- The Feast of Tabernacles
 - Occurs in the Jewish month of Tishri
 - Fall: September - October
 - Leviticus 23:33-43
 - Future Fulfillment

These are the feasts we will unwrap to see their connection to Ruth and to Jesus.

We are led to these feasts through the winter barley harvest in Ruth Chapter 2. This is the time of year when seeds sown months before have grown, bore fruit and are ready to be gathered. The harvest is an event that happens every year around the world and across the centuries, as early plants mature and produce crops. But the Book of Ruth provides a very unique view. A view that at first may appear to describe a common agricultural process, but with study reveals a key element of Biblical prophecy with a deep and complex meaning. Throughout the Bible scripture is frequently explained using agricultural terms. These are processes that would be understood by most cultures throughout history, but they also help us understand a deeper theological meaning. For example, Galatians 6:7 simply says, "**...for whatever a man sows,**

that he will also reap... (NKJV). On the surface this appears to describe planting and harvesting, but on deeper reflection we understand it to mean the way we live our lives will result in a good or bad outcome. Or said another way, the way we live, ***"...sows..."*** influences the outcome or harvest - the ***"...reap..."*** of our life. Jesus also used agricultural terms to explain a deeper meaning. We see this in The Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 which explains the harvest made possible by sharing the gospel seed. Some reject and wither away while others accept, grow and are harvested by Jesus, ***"...the Lord of the harvest..."*** (Matthew 9:38 NKJV). For those who accept Him as Savior the harvest is sweet and we are gathered to Him for eternal life. But for those who reject the Sower their harvest will be a gathering for eternal death, ***"...And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."*** (Revelation 14:15-16 NKJV)

Within this broader Biblical context the harvest in Ruth takes on a much deeper meaning as we begin to see how God orchestrates specific events in our lives to achieve His desired outcome. So, to set the stage let's jump ahead to see how the story unfolds. Then we can begin to see why the harvest is so important.

- God's grace for forgiveness and salvation is offered to everyone who will believe,
 - ***"...For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*** (John 3:17 NKJV)
- Paul confirms this to the church in Galatia, ***"...There is neither Jew nor Greek [Gentile], there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*** (Galatians 3:28 NKJV) – All are offered grace.
- This clearly affirms that all believers, both Jew and Gentile, become members of the Body of Christ - the *"church"*. (See Romans 12:4-8 / 1 Corinthians 12:12-36)
- So to demonstrate His intended outcome for Gentile redemption God used a very unlikely candidate. A Gentile woman, Ruth, a Moabite. A woman from a people who were the enemies of Israel.
- God then set the stage using a famine in Israel, which drove a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi to make a bad decision. They fled the Promised Land of Israel and settled in the land of their enemy, Moab.
- There Naomi meets Ruth, a Moabite, who chooses to accept the God of Israel as her own.
- In time Naomi, by then a widow, returned to Bethlehem with Ruth who was also a widow and a poor stranger.
- They arrive in the spring during the harvest of winter barley.
- But surprisingly Ruth is not shunned by the Israelite community. Instead, she is welcomed, and a man named Boaz, a man of position, invites Ruth to glean in His fields.
- This was possible because generations before God commanded Moses to declare that a portion of each harvested field was to be left for the poor, widows and strangers. (Leviticus 23:22)
- Ruth, a stranger, but now a kinsman of Boaz through Naomi, becomes his wife. An arrangement foreseen by God and commanded through Deuteronomy 25:5-10

- Ruth became the mother of Obed who was the father of Jesse, who was the father of David, who was king of Israel, who would establish the forever throne of Jesus.
 - **"...Boaz begot Obed by Ruth, Obed begot Jesse, and Jesse begot David the king..."** (Matthew 1:5-6 NKJV)
 - **"And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever."** (2 Samuel 7:16 NKJV)
 - **"Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."** (Isaiah 9:7 NKJV)
 - **"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David."** (Luke 1:32 NKJV)
- And so... Ruth, a stranger and an enemy of God, is redeemed by a Jewish kinsman and becomes a Gentile in the earthly genealogy of Jesus.
- But it is the harvest that God uses to tie all of this together.
 - Ruth arrives just as the winter harvest begins,
 - God had made a provision for widows to glean,
 - She gleans in the field of a kinsman,
 - The kinsman is willing to redeem her from poverty and give her a new life.
- In this we see a beautiful illustration of Romans 5:10, **"...For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."** (NKJV)

Thank You Lord Jesus

But what does all of this have to do with the feasts in Leviticus 23? Well, it is there in verse 22 that God made a provision for Ruth. A command that would allow her to glean in the field of Boaz even though she was a stranger and an enemy of Israel, **"...When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God."** (Leviticus 23:22 NKJV). Mere coincidence? Not on your life! This is the hand of God working with sovereignty through several lives and across several centuries so that we can look at Matthew 1:5 and realize God always intended for His grace and redemption to include Gentiles. At first, verse 22 may seem out of place but it takes on significant meaning when connected to the harvest of Ruth and of Jesus. It was through the harvest that Ruth was redeemed by Boaz and it is through the harvest of souls that Jesus brings us to Him when we are redeemed. In a sense we are the crop of His fruit, the believers, harvested by Jesus from the seeds of the gospel He has sown across time.

The Book of Ruth

Week 2

The Feast of Passover

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Background

- Leviticus chapter 23 outlines seven feasts of Israel.
 - Each presents offerings to God and reflects on Israel's obedience to God's commands
 - The Feast of Passover
 - The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - The Feast of Firstfruits
 - The Feast of Pentecost
 - The "Pause"
 - The Feast of Trumpets
 - The Day of Atonement
 - The Feast of Tabernacles
- Four have already been fulfilled – Passover through Pentecost
 - The "Pause" is the age we live in now – The "Age of Grace"
 - Then three will be fulfilled in the future – Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles
 - Each one is a Messianic prophecy of Jesus
- The feasts connect the story of Ruth to the story of Jesus. — And the Old Testament to the New Testament
 - But how?
 - Through Leviticus 23:22
 - A verse that falls roughly in the middle of the feasts
 - At first glance the verse appears to be out of place
 - But it was a provision of God that enabled the redemption of Ruth
 - ***"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God."*** (Leviticus 23:22 NKJV)
 - It was verse 22 - written generations before - that allowed Ruth the Gentile enemy to glean in the fields of Boaz the Jewish redeemer
- Now, let's look at the first feast - The Passover

The Passover

- Occurs in the Jewish month of Nisan
- Spring: March - April
- Leviticus 23:4-5
 - ***"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."*** (Leviticus 23:4-6 NKJV)
- Fulfilled

The Passover, celebrated along with The Feast of Unleavened Bread, is probably the most well-known of all the feasts and one of the most important to Israel. For the purpose of our study we'll discuss these two feasts separately because they are listed that way in Leviticus 23. Passover occurs on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan during the early spring harvest. It commemorates the time when God redeemed the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt to take them to their promised land,

- ***"Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike 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. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance."*** (Exodus 12:1-14 NKJV)

- Prior to leaving Egypt God commanded the people to sacrifice a spotless lamb and use its blood to paint the doorposts and lintels of their house. This signified their belief in God and symbolized the redemption of their sin through a blood atonement. That night when the angel of judgment came through Egypt he would "pass over" any home whose door was painted with blood.
 - Simply put, the blood on the door is a sign of faith, and the passing over by judgment is God's grace. It is a beautiful picture of the gospel message of salvation by faith in the promised redemption through Jesus who was our blood sacrifice.
- For centuries the commemoration of that night was observed in the temple through the sacrifice of a spotless lamb (or other approved animal) whose blood was shed for the sins of the people.
- **"Therefore you shall sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God, from the flock and the herd, in the place where the Lord chooses to put His name [the Tabernacle]." (Deuteronomy 16:2 NKJV – See also Leviticus 4, and 6 beginning with verse 24).**
- Although this redemption – the Exodus – occurred during the time of Moses, centuries before God had already told Abraham the reason their redemption would take place,
 - ***Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions."*** (Genesis 15:13-14 NKJV)
 - God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation (Israel), and through them would bless all the nations of the world (Genesis 12:2-3). And yet, God also told Abraham his descendants would first go into captivity in Egypt. From where God would later gather them and take them to the Promised Land. In doing so, God promised to rescue them - to redeem them. This was a covenant made by God to Abraham when He said ***"...afterward they shall come out..."***. They would ***"...come out..."*** because God had already planned to bring them out.
 - As God told Moses generations later,
 - ***"...And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them. I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land***

***which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.'* (Exodus 6:2-8 NKJV)**

- Passover was the premier celebration in ancient Israel when redeemed pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. It was so important, the Roman-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD) estimated that during a single Passover in Jerusalem over 256,000 lambs were slain.
- It was also during His family's Passover visit that the young Jesus would fascinate the scribes with His knowledge,
 - ***"...His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them."* (Luke 2:41-50 NKJV)** The Bible doesn't reveal what amazing things the young Jesus said to the teachers, but given what we now know He could have easily said, *"One day you will realize that I am the Passover "*
- In addition to its fascinating historical context the Passover also gives us an amazing Messianic prophecy we can now understand.
 - On the night before Jesus was crucified He celebrated the Passover feast with His disciples,
 - ***"...And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover."* (Matthew 26:18-19 NKJV)**
- This specific Passover meal would forever have a much deeper meaning for us. That night Jesus would administer the Passover for His disciples, but in doing so He did something never done before. God in flesh would give mankind a lesson on humility and grace,
 - ***"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, rose from supper and laid aside His garments,***

took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded." (John 13:1-5 NKJV)

- Jesus, who is God and therefore sinless, washed the feet of men who are human and sinful. A task normally accomplished by the lowest class of servants, was now performed by the King of kings. The feet He washed belonged to men who had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Men who recognized that the homeless Carpenter from Nazareth is in fact God.
- But there was more. During the Passover feast Jesus demonstrated yet another prophecy by showing that the Passover meal was actually a commemoration of His own sacrifice,
 - **"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." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 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." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."** (Matthew 26:26-30 NKJV).
 - The hymn mentioned in this passage is probably taken from Psalm 113-118. Known as the "*Hallel*" which means "*praise*" in Hebrew. These psalms reference the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, and are to this day a part of the Passover meal.
 - The disciples would not yet fully understand what Jesus meant, but through that night and over the next three days they would come to realize that Jesus is the Passover Lamb. The Holy unblemished Lamb of God who was given by the Father so that all the world might be redeemed,
 - **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."** (John 3:16 NKJV)
 - With this knowledge it all began to make sense. Whether it was an animal slain for the sin of Adam, the first-fruit of Abel, the faith of Abraham that God would provide a lamb, the Passover lamb in Egypt, the lamb of man sacrificed in the temple, or the Lamb of God sacrificed on the cross, they all represent the willingness of God to forgive sin through His promise represented by a sacrificial atonement. And they all represent God's grace to "pass over" the sins of those who have the door of their heart painted in the blood of the Lamb.

This is what we commemorate today in the observance of Communion. Like Baptism, Communion is not required for salvation, but it is an action of obedience after salvation to show we believe in and accept Jesus as the sacrifice for our sin. It is a time to reflect on our own lives and confess our own sins. Why? Because as Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, **"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let**

him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. (NKJV)" This is a carryover from the ritual cleansing performed by ancient Israelites prior to the Passover, **"And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves.** (John 11:55 NKJV). Both of these passages remind us that Communion is a solemn event when our heart is to be pure before the Lord. As Paul reminds us, Communion, like Passover, is a reminder that our sins were forgiven by the shedding of innocent blood,

- **"...For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NKJV)

The Passover commemorates the redemption of sin through the sacrifice of innocent blood. The time when redemption passed from the temporary lamb of man to the permanent **"...Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"** (John 1:29b NKJV). Whether it was intended for the redemption of Adam for his own sin, or the redemption through Jesus for the sin of mankind, those who accept God's offered grace are passed over in judgment because we have accepted Jesus as our sacrificial payment and have, **"...washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb..."** (Revelation 7:14 NKJV). Therefore we are made new in Christ Jesus and have become **"...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."**. (Romans 8:17 NKJV). And by our faith in Jesus we become the harvest of souls who will be redeemed and gathered to Him for eternity. It's important to remember. The Israelites of the Exodus were not spared because they selected the lamb, or cared for the lamb or even loved the lamb. They were saved by their faith in God's promise as illustrated by the lamb slain in their place and the blood covering the door of their home. And so it is with Jesus. The Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world and His blood is painted on the doors of our heart. That's the good news of God's redemptive grace - the gospel - sown by the Sower. Those who accept the seed of His word are fed and nurtured as we grow in our faith so that we who were once strangers and enemies of God, are now like Ruth; redeemed and ready to be gathered by the Lord. O thank You Jesus - our blessed Sower and King.

The Book of Ruth

Week 2 Continued

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Quick Recap:

In the first part of this week's lesson we discussed the first of seven feasts in Leviticus 23 - the Passover. Probably the most well known of Israel's holy days, Passover commemorates God's redemption of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The night when God's destroying angel "*passed over*" the homes of those whose doors had been sprinkled with the blood of a spotless lamb. But as we dug deeper into scripture we uncovered a profound Messianic prophecy. Jesus, through His own sacrifice, is our Passover Lamb, and it is our faith in His work on the cross that sprinkles the door of our heart with the blood of the Lamb and rescues us from the bondage of sin and eternal judgment. So just like Israel, we were redeemed from our sin by faith in the blood of the Lamb.

But there's a second part to the Passover feast that reveals another important Messianic prophecy. In preparation for their exodus from Egypt, Israel was told to make bread without leaven (yeast). This reinforced the fact they needed to be ready to escape from Egypt at a moment's notice, but it also demonstrated the redemption of their sin. This practice became a separate part of the Passover feast.

Now, let's discuss the second of the seven feasts, The Feast of Unleavened Bread.

- 1. The Passover
- 2. - The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - 3. - The Feast of Firstfruits (of the Harvest)
 - 4. The Feast of Pentecost (also, The Feast of Weeks)
 - 5. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
 - 6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
 - 7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

- Occurs in the Jewish month of Nisan
- Spring: March - April
- Leviticus 23:6-8
 - ***"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; 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."*** (Leviticus 23:6-8 NKJV)
- Fulfilled

The Feast of Unleavened Bread, or "...*Chag HaMatzot...*", in Hebrew, was celebrated with the Passover but is listed separately in Leviticus 23:6. It began on the 15th day of the month of Nisan and immediately after the start of the Passover which began on the 14th. For seven days the people ate bread made without yeast (leaven), plus they had to remove all yeast and yeast-made products from their home.

But why was it so important to make "*unleavened*" bread without yeast? During the exodus unleavened bread represented Israel's need to react quickly when they were called out of Egypt. In other words, when God commanded them to leave Egypt there would be no time to prepare, or wait, like the time it takes for yeast to rise the dough. So the unleavened bread was a way to help them understand they must be ready to move quickly to follow God's commands. We see this in Exodus 12 where Moses gave specific instructions for eating the Passover meal in haste,

- ***"...And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover."*** (Exodus 12:11 NKJV).
- In other words, you must be fully dressed, with sandals on your feet and a walking staff in hand. That way you're prepared to leave Egypt at a moment's notice.
- So, ***"And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves."*** (Exodus 12:39 NKJV)
- This further clarifies that obedience to God must be accomplished without delay. Thereby ensuring we're always ready to follow God's lead whenever He calls.
- In a sense, Matthew 24:44 tells us the same thing and reminds us to be ready and obedient in preparation for Christ's return,
 - ***"...Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*** (NKJV)"

But being ready to answer God's call takes effort. It requires us to continually search our heart for sin and seek to remove it. This was demonstrated by the action Israel took to remove leaven from their homes, which illustrates the need to remove leaven from our lives (Exodus 12:15). To stress the importance of this lesson Moses reminded Israel why they were removing

leaven from their homes and eating unleavened bread. It was a physical reminder of what God had done to redeem them from their sin. Just as we are reminded of the leaven in our own life and what God has done through Jesus to redeem us,

- ***"And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.' It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year."*** (Exodus 13:3-10 NKJV)
- Here Moses is simply reminding the people of Israel (and us) to recognize the significance of unleavened bread. It was not a memorial to anything they have done, but was a tangible reminder that God's grace brought them ***"...out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place."***
- Prophetically we are also reminded that Jesus, the Bread of Life without sin, brings us out of the bondage of our sin through God's redemptive grace.
- Moses also reminded Israel of the difficulties that will emerge in life as we come face to face with our own trials. He uses the example of ***"...Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites..."***. These were not just enemies of Israel but were also a source of temptation and sin that drew Israel away from God. They are a reminder that sources of sin surround us everyday and can cause us to fall. But thinking a little deeper it also points out that Israel had to fight these enemies in order to remove them from the promised land. Just as we have to fight to consciously purge sources of leaven from our own lives.
- As a tangible reminder of this important lesson Jews often focus attention on a specific portion of this passage, ***"...It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt..."***. To demonstrate this verse in their own lives Jews will sometimes tie a small square box on their forehead when they pray. The little box, called a *"phylactery"* generally contains three or four verses; all speaking of God's word and His redemption:
- Deuteronomy 6:8 NKJV
 - ***"You shall bind them [God's word] as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."***
- Deuteronomy 11:18 NKJV

- ***"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."***
- Exodus 13:9 & 16 NKJV
 - ***"It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt."***
 - ***"It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."***
- For Jews, these verses serve as a physical reminder of what God did for Israel when He brought them out of their leaven in Egypt. But in the same vein they remind us of the fact Jesus came as the sinless Unleavened Bread of Life and redeemed us from sin by the grace and mercy of God.

But why leaven? In the Bible, leaven (yeast) is often used to represent sin. Just as Jesus did when He warned His disciples to be wary of the sinful Jewish leadership, ***"Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.'"*** (Matthew 16:5-6 NKJV) Paul uses a similar illustration to help us form a mental picture in our minds that even a small amount of sin in our lives can impact us in a very significant way — Just as a small amount of yeast can quickly impact an entire lump of dough, ***"...Do you not know that a little leaven [yeast] leavens the whole lump? 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. 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."*** (1 Corinthians 5:6-8 NKJV). Here Paul links the Passover requirement of purging leaven from our homes, with purging leaven from our lives. This occurs when we accept Jesus as our Passover Lamb who ***"...was sacrificed for us..."*** to remove our sin. Jesus, who is of course sinless, is the perfect and unleavened ***"...bread of life..."***. (John 6:35). And being perfect, He is represented by bread without leaven - a life without sin - who became sin for us by taking our leaven on Himself, ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** (2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV) In that context, Paul implores us to remove the old leaven, our sin, so that we will be more like unleavened bread. More like Jesus, ***"...that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [leaven], and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."*** (Ephesians 4:22-24 NKJV). This new condition of, ***"...true righteousness and holiness..."*** is another way of describing our walk as a believer when we consciously and continuously seek to remove sin from our lives. Just as a Jewish father would search through his home with a candle to find and remove all yeast before Passover, so too we should consciously search our hearts to remove leaven from our life. But how do we do that? By walking in the light of a life focused on Jesus, ***"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."*** (1 John 1:7 NKJV). The consciousness that ***"...cleanses us..."*** is what Paul meant when he said, ***"...put off - the old man..."***. To do this we must constantly search our

own life for sources of sin and remove it. Just as the Jewish father searches for yeast in his home we must declare, **"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting."** (Psalm 139:23-24 NKJV).

In that context we can glean several meanings from the unleavened bread:

- It represents the haste with which we must be obedient to God's commands,
- It illustrates the sin redeemed from our lives by the Lamb,
- And, it represents Jesus, who without sin is the Unleavened Bread of Life and the source of our eternal life.

So to further illustrate this last point Jesus used the unleavened bread at the last Passover meal to show that He is our Unleavened Bread, **"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'**" (Mark 14:22 NKJV). On the night of the exodus from Egypt God commanded Israel to eat the sacrificed lamb with unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). Generations later He instituted a new event to represent the sacrificed Lamb of God. The unleavened bread Jesus used at the last Passover and the unleavened bread we use in Communion today represents the sinless body of Christ that hung on the cross for us. The Bread without leaven, that took our leaven on Himself. But please don't be confused by the purpose of Communion. It is not a source of salvation. Communion is simply an act of obedience that demonstrates our belief in the saving grace of Jesus, the sinless Lamb on the cross who died for our sins. Far too often people approach Communion as if it were a part of salvation, when it is simply an act of obedience. But even if it were possible to live an unleavened life, and it's not, it would still be insufficient to earn salvation. That's important to understand because works-based salvation (viewing Communion as a "work") is diametrically opposed to the clear Biblical doctrine of salvation by faith in God's grace through the sacrificial atonement of the Lamb. Paul confirms this in Ephesians when he says, **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."** (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV). Jesus also confirms this through His instructions, **"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'**" (Luke 22:19 NKJV) Jesus didn't tell us to observe communion in order to gain salvation. It is intended to be **"...in remembrance of Me..."**. Remembering that the Unleavened Bread was made leaven for us.

Likewise, the effort to remove sin from our life is not a way to earn salvation. It is simply our effort to walk upright with the Lord so that our lives can be a **"...living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."** (Romans 12:1b-2 NKJV). That's why Paul refers to this self-cleansing process and adds a warning about our observance of Communion,

- **"Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."** (1 Corinthians 11:27-29 NKJV)

- This reinforces the importance of continually searching our life for sin and working diligently to remove it.

But leaven can present itself in other ways. Just as *"One bad apple can ruin the whole bushel."*, one disgruntled church member can negatively impact a whole congregation. Disunity, gossip, back-biting and cliques can spell disaster for a church because they are a type of corporate leaven. Paul spends considerable time in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and Romans chapter 15 talking about unity in the congregant body of Christ. ***"...there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."*** (1 Corinthians 12:25-26 NKJV). The word used here, "schism" means "division" or "to tear a garment". It is a clear warning about the dangers of discord within a church that can literally tear a church apart. This topic was so important that Paul spent most of an entire chapter in Romans talking about unity in the body. A view clearly explained when he pleaded with the church, ***"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (Romans 15:5-6 NKJV).

Likewise, false teachers and false doctrine are leaven and can quickly breed confusion and discord amongst believers. This is something Paul warned Timothy about two-thousand years ago but it sounds as if Paul was looking at our society today. ***"...For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*** (2 Timothy 4:3-4 NKJV). Due to the widespread use of social media, false teaching is probably more prevalent today than at any time in history. While social media certainly has its usefulness, it has unfortunately become a powerful tool for our enemy as he uses it to infect the minds of billions with his lies. That's why we have to remember, authors and social media influencers don't have to be openly satanic in order to spread false doctrine. In most cases they come across as legitimate and well intended but their message, which often sounds good, is actually unbiblical and misleading,

- ***"...For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."*** (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 NKJV).

There are literally hundreds of social media pastors, teachers, commentators and religious influencers who spread incorrect, false and misleading doctrine - leaven -, but on the surface they seem to be legitimate. That's why Jesus warns us to beware of the proverbial *"wolf in sheep's clothing..."* ***"...Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves."*** (Matthew 7:15 NKJV).

So please be careful what you read and what you listen to. And always use God's word as the standard of truth. All of these are examples of both individual and corporate leaven that can infect and fester if left unchecked. That's why we should all be alert to the leaven in ourselves and in our church. That's why we must all grab a symbolic candle and seek to remove the yeast before it has a chance to ***"...leavens the whole lump..."***. That's also why we must always focus on Jesus. The only Unleavened Bread of life.

The Book of Ruth

Week 3

The Feast of Firstfruits

Quick Recap:

Far too often well-meaning Christians discount the value of the Old Testament. Some believe it's intended primarily for Israel, while others think it's probably outdated and may not apply to us in modern times. Unfortunately, both are wrong, and as a result many people don't understand that the Old Testament is equal to the New Testament in telling the whole story of Jesus. We see this clearly when Jesus spoke to two doubting believers as they walked along the road to Emmaus after His resurrection, **"...Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."** (Luke 24:25-27 NKJV). How much clearer could He be? Jesus is telling us that the entire Old Testament, **"...Moses and all the prophets..."** (Genesis to Malachi), including **"...all the scriptures..."** are about **"...Himself..."**. And yet, a large percentage of Christians don't study the Old Testament and therefore never see the prophetic picture of our Lord.

And that's exactly why we're doing this short study of the seven feasts in Leviticus 23. So we can see that what may at first appear to be an Old Testament description of ancient Israelite rituals are actually a chronological series of amazing Messianic prophecies revealed by Jesus in the New Testament. That's why studying these Old Testament passages brings us closer to Jesus because they give more meaning and depth to our understanding of God's word.

For example, the first of the seven feasts we studied is the Passover. An event that first occurred when Israel were slaves in ancient Egypt gives us a picture of God's redemptive grace through the shed blood of an atoning sacrifice. But as we dig deeper into scripture we begin to understand that the lamb of man sacrificed for the sin of Israel, points to the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sin of the world. This was followed by the second ceremony, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Originally initiated to represent Israel's obedience to God's commands and the cleansing of their sin, but from a New Testament perspective it represents Jesus, who had no sin and is therefore the sinless (Unleavened) Bread of Life.

Now, with that context let's discuss the third of the seven feasts, The Feast of Firstfruits.

- 1. The Passover
- 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 3. The Feast of Firstfruits (Fruits of the Harvest)
 - 4. The Feast of Pentecost (also, The Feast of Weeks)
 - 5. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
 - 6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
 - 7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Firstfruits

- Occurs in the Jewish month of Nisan
- Spring: March - April
- Leviticus 23:9-14
 - ***And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord. Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.'" (NKJV)***
- Fulfilled

The Feast of Firstfruits was celebrated on the 16th of Nisan and came immediately after The Feast of Unleavened Bread. It represents the harvest; the culmination of sowing, growing and reaping. This includes the harvest of the field, but also of the flock and of the vine, ***"And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord. Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin."*** (Leviticus 23:12-13 NKJV). This offering demonstrates that all things are provided by God and belong to God. It occurs at the time of harvest when the first crop that has come up from the ground is gathered. In other words, a resurrection of sorts. A gathering of what was planted that has now come forth as the first of the fruit. Paul speaks to this in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 and provides a key link between the harvest, the firstfruit and Jesus, ***"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*** (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NKJV).

So what is a Firstfruit? Biblically speaking it is an offering made to God using the best of a new harvest. An offering from the first of the fruit which is selected because it is spotless and free from imperfections. It represents an offering to God of the best we have, and no matter what type of offering it was, it was expected to be our very best. An offering ***"...without blemish..."*** (Leviticus 1:3 NKJV). Just as Moses was directed by God at the first Passover, ***"Your lamb shall be without blemish..."*** (Exodus 12:5 NKJV). Sometimes the offering was a crop, like grain or wine from grapes, if God's instructions allowed for that, but generally it was a blood offering from an animal.

But either way it was to be the first choice of the harvest. The first of the fruit that was provided by God. We see an example of this is Genesis chapter 4 when Cain and Abel (sons of Adam and Eve) brought an offering to God,

- ***"Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, 'I have acquired a man from the Lord.' Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell."*** (Genesis 4:1-5 NKJV)

First, we note that Cain was a farmer of crops and Abel was a shepherd of the flock. Both were acceptable occupations. But their offerings were significantly different. Cain made ***"...an offering of the fruit of the ground..."***. In other words, he gave an offering of his crops from his own labor. But Abel ***"...brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat..."***. Able brought an animal. A sheep, but not just any sheep. It was a firstborn; specifically selected for this purpose. Scripture indicates the lamb had been slain because Abel separated the fat. This required significant effort to prepare the lamb, but more importantly, by slaying the lamb it became a blood offering. A substitutional offering for sin. Cain's offering was rejected and Abel's was accepted. Not because Cain failed to provide an offering, but he failed to satisfy God's expectations of the shed blood for sin. The Bible doesn't say how Cain and Abel knew they needed to provide an offering or what the offering was supposed to be. They may have learned through direct instructions from God, or very likely through Adam and Eve telling them about the blood sacrifice that covered their original sin (Genesis 3:21).

But they are not the only example of an offering made before the Tabernacle was established. Abraham obviously knew about the offerings' significance generations before it was explained by Levitical law. We see this in Genesis 22:8 when Abraham told Isaac, ***"...My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering..."***(NKJV). This is a clear indication that Abraham knew what was expected of a substitutionary sacrifice without having the benefit of written scripture.

Whatever the source of their knowledge it's obvious both Cain and Abel knew what was required. But to better understand why Cain's offering was rejected and Abel's was accepted let's consult the writer of Hebrews, ***"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."*** (Hebrews 11:4 NKJV). Abel's offering wasn't ***"...excellent..."*** because it was better quality, or even because it was an animal. His offering was excellent because Abel's offering satisfied God's expectation for blood atonement made ***"...By faith..."***. In other words, his offering was not made out of compulsion or obligation. It was made through faith, which demonstrates his testimony, or ***"...witness..."*** to God's atonement of sin through a substitutional sacrifice. It was his ***"...faith..."***, not his offering or his effort that made him ***"...righteous..."***. Abel wasn't trying to gain righteousness like Cain, through his own works represented by a crop offering. Instead, Abel was trusting in the promises of God to redeem his sin through the sacrifice of a lamb. But he did so with ***"...faith..."***

in God's promises. That's because, **"...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."** (Hebrews 11:6 NKJV) Just as Abraham had done when he had faith in God's promises, **"...And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."** (Genesis 15:6 NKJV). So too, Abel understood the reason for the offering was to show his **"...faith..."** in God's promises.

Over time God institutionalized the sacrificial system through the temple. This included several types of offerings generally officiated by the Levitical priests (see Leviticus chapters 1-7). Specific offerings were done at specific times and for specific reasons, and generally required complex preparation in order to show absolute obedience to God's requirements. The complex steps the priest went through demonstrated the due-diligence required to achieve God's commands. These offerings were important to God and He expected them to be performed in a specific way. So much so, that when two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu made an offering in an irreverent manner God destroyed them, **"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.' " So Aaron held his peace."** (Leviticus 10:1-3 NKJV). Aaron's sons learned the hard way how serious God is about obedience.

That's why the ceremonial discipline illustrated by the sacrificial offering is a direct application for our lives as well. As Paul writes, **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."** (Romans 12:1 NKJV). Isn't that amazing, God views us as an offering. A **"...living sacrifice..."**, demonstrated through our lives lived out for Jesus. We're not a dead sacrifice because our Savior has already taken that death for us on the cross. We are a **"...living sacrifice..."** who belong to a living Savior. An offering, washed by Jesus, that is **"...holy, acceptable to God..."**. In other words, **"...without blemish..."**. But how can that be? In our current mortal state we don't feel very spotless do we?. But as a believer, God looks at us through the veil of the blood of Jesus in order to see us holy in His eyes. Not because of anything we did, but because of our faith in what Christ did on the cross. This is our transition from lost to saved, from unrighteous to righteous, from the old man to the new, from being enemies of God to being fully in Christ. This is our faith, transforming our life from what we were to what we are. A life lived for Jesus. This is our life as an offering to God, holy and acceptable.

And that... is a beautiful thing.

So given all of that, how does the Feast of Firstfruits relate to Jesus? The writer of Hebrews tells us,

- **"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 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, 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 NKJV)

Here we see Jesus called the ***"...firstborn..."***. The resurrected King, ***"...the firstborn from the dead..."*** (Colossians 1:18a NKJV). He is the ***"...Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood..."***. It is Jesus, ***"...the firstborn into the world..."*** (Hebrews 1:6 NKJV) who is the spotless Lamb who ***"...made peace through the blood of His cross."*** (Colossians 1:20 NKJV). He is the sacrifice given by God so that ***"...whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*** (John 3:16). It is Jesus who is ***"...Christ the firstfruits..."*** (1 Corinthians 15:23 NKJV) who gave His life as the substitutional sacrifice for man, because ***"...now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*** (1 Corinthians 15:20 NKJV).

But how is Jesus a firstfruit?

- First of all He is the perfect sacrifice. The undefiled and sinless Lamb of God. As John the Baptist declared, ***"...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (John 1:29 NKJV).
- Jesus is the Unleavened Bread of Life, the offering without leaven who took our leaven from us, ***"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*** (2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV).
- Jesus is, ***"...My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth."*** (Psalm 89:27 NKJV),
- Jesus is, ***"...the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."*** (Colossians 1:15 NKJV)
- Jesus is the harvest, ***"...Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."*** (Revelation 1:5 NKJV)

Jesus is also the firstborn resurrected from the grave. ***"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*** (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NKJV). Here Paul links two important points. First, Jesus is ***"...risen from the dead..."*** and as such He is ***"...the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep..."***. In other words, Jesus is the first One resurrected to life so that those of us in Christ will be resurrected like Him. This speaks to the second point, the ultimate harvest at the Rapture, ***"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord."***

Therefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 NKJV). Not only does this speak to the resurrection of Jesus, who ***"...rose again..."***, but also to the resurrection of His followers when, ***"...the dead in Christ will rise..."*** and ***"...we who are live and remain shall be caught up together..."***. The time when the ***"...Lord of the harvest ..."*** (Matthew 9:38 NKJV) gathers His crop of souls to be with Him for eternity. This is what Paul is referring to when he says, ***"...Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*** (1 Corinthians 15:23 NKJV). He is talking about the time when Jesus, the Sower, returns to gather His crop, ***"...So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."*** (1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NKJV) This is the Rapture. The harvest of God's crop of the redeemed. The body of Christ followers being retrieved from the soils of this life to an eternity with Him. Just as Jesus promised, ***"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*** (John 14:3 NKJV). As His bride we are firstfruits ourselves, ***"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."*** (James 1:18 NKJV)

Thank You Jesus.

Hopefully you can now see why these Old Testament events are so important to helping us see how the prophetic story of Jesus comes together:

- The *Passover* - represents Jesus who is the atoning sacrifice for our sin, and as believers we are "passed over" in judgment.
- The *Feast of Unleavened Bread* - represents Jesus, the sinless and undefiled Bread of Life who was offered for us.
- The *Feast of Firstfruits* - represents Jesus as the sinless offering to God resurrected from the dead as the Firstfruit of those who will be resurrected with Him. ***"...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 NKJV).

I pray this study is giving you clear insight into the fact that, ***"...And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."*** (Luke 24:27 NKJV).

The Book of Ruth

Week 4

The Feast of Pentecost

Quick Recap:

I hope these lessons have opened your eyes to the necessity of studying the Old Testament. Often sidelined as outdated, the Old Testament is just as important as the New Testament when it comes to understanding our Lord Jesus. In fact, if your personal Bible study only focuses on the New Testament then you're missing a big part of the story. We've seen this through our study of Ruth and its beautiful prophecy of Jesus. But going further, our side study into the feasts of Leviticus 23 gives us an even deeper view of the Messianic message found throughout the entire Old Testament.

We've clearly seen this in the first three festivals:

- The Passover
 - When a lamb was slain for the sin of Israel during their exodus from Egypt and God's wrath passed over them because of their faith.
 - But it also represents Jesus who is the atoning Lamb of God, sacrificed for our sin, so that as believers we are "passed over" in judgment.
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Commemorates the haste of Israel's obedience and the forgiveness of their sin.
 - But it also represents Jesus, the sinless and undefiled Bread of Life who was offered for us.
- The Feast of Firstfruits
 - Celebrates the end of the harvest and the bounty provided by God.
 - But it also represents Jesus as the sinless offering on the cross who was resurrected from the dead as the Firstfruit of those who will be resurrected with Him at the Rapture.

Now, with that quick review let's continue with the fourth festival, The Feast of Pentecost. The final feast that has already been fulfilled.

- 1. The Passover
- 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 3. The Feast of Firstfruits (Fruits of the Harvest)
- 4. The Feast of Pentecost (also, The Feast of Weeks)
 - 5. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
 - 6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
 - 7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Pentecost

- Occurs in the Jewish month of Sivan
- Spring: May-June
- Leviticus 23:15-21
 - ***"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. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. 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. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. 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 generations. (Leviticus 23:15-21 NKJV)***
- Fulfilled

The Feast of Pentecost was celebrated during the month of Sivan, which is equivalent to our May and June. The Feast of Unleavened Bread had already taken place on the 16th of Nisan and Pentecost occurred fifty days later marking the end of the spring harvest season. The fifty days was also counted as seven weeks as we see in Deuteronomy 16:

- ***"You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain [the harvest]. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you."*** (Deuteronomy 16:9-10 NKJV)

Since the event occurred seven weeks after the beginning of the harvest it is often called the Feast of "*Shavuoth*" or "Weeks". We get the word "*Pentecost*" from the original Greek word "*Pentēkostēc*" meaning "*fiftieth*", and was the term used in the original Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. A translation made in the 2nd/3rd century BC to convert Hebrew scripture to Greek, because by that time Greek was the most common language in the Mediterranean region. The Greek term "*Pentekostec*" was later translated into Latin and then into English during the Middle Ages as the word "*Pentecost*".

In Jewish tradition the event also commemorates the day God gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai (Deuteronomy 5). This is based on the offering of Passover memorializing the exodus of Israel from Egypt, which is the beginning of Israel as a nation, and The Feast of

Weeks which memorializes giving of the Law to Israel as guidance for their corporate obedience to God. But prophetically, Passover represents the sacrifice of Jesus to redeem sin and The Feast of Weeks represents the completion of Jesus' earthly ministry, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the birth of the church. We see this when Peter preached on Pentecost and three thousand were saved. These are the first of those, both Jew and Gentile, who would become the body of Christ - the church. The Bible doesn't tell us the exact day Moses received the Law, but the timing might be indicated by a reference in Acts 2:1-2 when the Holy Spirit came on the apostles, **"...When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."** (Acts 2:1-2 NKJV). This event occurred fifty days after Jesus was resurrected. We know this because Jesus was on earth 40 days from His resurrection until He ascended to heaven, **"...to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."** (Acts 1:3 NKJV). Plus, there was an additional ten days between then and the time of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit indwelt the apostles. That's a total of fifty days between the time Jesus was resurrected until the Holy Spirit arrived. Just as it was fifty days between the start of the harvest (resurrection of the sown seed) until the Feast of Pentecost. I also find it interesting that fifty is the number of years God commanded Israel to celebrate the year of Jubilee, **"And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family."** (Leviticus 25:8-10 NKJV). This was the time of Jubilee. A time when all debts were paid and the people could **"...proclaim liberty.. "**. The freedom of being debt free. Similarly, when Christ was crucified and resurrected He paid our debts and set us free. Fifty days later the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell all believers so that we may have freedom and liberty from condemnation, **"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."** (2 Corinthians 3:17 NKJV)

Thank You Jesus.

As defined by Leviticus 23:15-21 (NKJV), The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost included several offerings:

- A burnt offering of **"...seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams..."**
- A meal offering of grain, **"...an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord."**
- A drink offering,
- A sin offering of, **"...one kid of the goats as a sin offering..."**
- A peace offering of, **"...two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs."**

When you step back and really think about this passage you realize just how much time and effort was required to prepare and administer these sacrifices. This was not to use works for salvation, but was an effort to glorify God by obediently following His exact instructions. It's also interesting to note that the sin offering comes before the peace offering. This demonstrates that without the forgiveness of sin there is no peace with God. Paul spoke about this in Romans 5:10-11 NKJV, ***"For if when we were enemies [of God] we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation."*** It is our faith in the work of Christ Jesus on the cross that takes us from a state of wrath to a state of peace. A peace that comes only after the remission of our sin, because, ***"...There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."*** (Romans 8:1-2 NKJV)

But there's another point worth noting. The bread of this sacrifice was made with leaven, which represents sin, ***"...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 NKJV). So let's think this through. Why are there two loaves? Why are they baked with leaven? And why are they called ***"...firstfruits..."***? As you'll recall, from a prophetic perspective Pentecost celebrates the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the church. In God's eyes there is no difference in Jew and Gentile once we are in Christ, ***"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*** (Galatians 3:28 NKJV). That means we are all one when we are ***"...in Christ..."***. Why is that? Because ***"...you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus..."*** (Galatians 3:26-27 NKJV). The two loaves represent the combined body of believers, Jew and Gentile, like Naomi and Ruth, but they are baked with yeast to signify that sin still exists in our mortal state. But yet, as children of God we ***"...are the firstfruits to the Lord..."***. The choice gathering of His crop of sown seed.

Thank You Jesus.

The Book of Ruth

Week 5

The Pause

Quick Recap:

Our last lesson on The Feast of Pentecost completed our study of the first four Feasts in Leviticus chapter 23. As we've seen, all four of these feasts occurred in the spring of the year and were associated with the early harvest of winter barley. More importantly, from a prophetic perspective each provides a clear Messianic view of Jesus:

- He is the slain Lamb of *Passover*
- The Lamb with no sin who is the *Unleavened Bread of Life*
- He is the resurrected *Firstfruit* of the harvest
- And the One whose ascension ushered in the Holy Spirit at *Pentecost* and set in motion the "*Church Age*". The age of grace we live in today.

This connection between Old Testament prophecy and its New Testament fulfillment helps us clearly understand why Jesus said, "***And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets*** [the Old Testament] , ***He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.***" (Luke 24:27 NKJV).

All four of the spring feasts have been fulfilled by Jesus leaving the remaining three to be fulfilled in the future. But between the fourth and fifth feasts is a single verse that at first glance may seem out of place.

So let's call it "*The Pause*".

- 1. The Passover
- 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 3. The Feast of Firstfruits (Fruits of the Harvest)
- 4. The Feast of Pentecost (The Feast of Weeks)

The Pause

- 5. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
- 6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
- 7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Pause

Leviticus 23:22

The first four feasts occurred in the spring of the year. The time of sowing and growing for the early grain harvest. As we've seen these feasts represent events already fulfilled:

- Passover - Jesus at His crucifixion,
- Unleavened Bread - Jesus in His sinlessness,
- Firstfruits - Jesus at His resurrection
- Pentecost - Jesus at His ascension and establishment of His church.

But after the fourth feast there is a verse that seems oddly out of place. So that rather than going directly from the fourth feast to the fifth there is a pause at verse 22.

Let's see what it says:

- ***"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God."***
(Leviticus 23:22 NKJV)

That's odd...right in the middle of a detailed discussion about seven feasts is a single verse about leaving grain in the field ***"...for the poor and for the stranger..."***. Unlike the other verses it doesn't mention anything about an offering or sacrifice but it is still a direct commandment from God. Let's look at the story of Ruth to see how this fits in:

- When the two women arrived in Bethlehem they were poor and widowed with no support. So Ruth took the initiative and offered to glean the fields. This was a common practice for the poor and widows to do as they walked behind those harvesting the fields to pick up whatever scraps were left behind. But this simple task would become a key part of the story, because in hindsight we can recognize God's hand of providence when Ruth gleans in the field of a man named Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi through Elimelech, and a man of position and wealth. As an Israelite landowner he could have forced Ruth to leave. Yet rather than evict the young Moabite woman Boaz protected her and offered to provide for her and Naomi. In other words, he would redeem them despite their sin.
- All of this was made possible because Naomi and Ruth arrived in the spring during the early barley harvest. The time of gathering the first fields that had been sown earlier in the year. But their timing was not a coincidence or good luck. It was the hand of God working through the details of several lives at once to achieve His intended purpose. It was the harvest that allowed Ruth to work in the field of Boaz, and as we will see, it was the harvest that tells an amazing story of how a stranger and an enemy of God can become a beautiful redeemed bride.

Now that we have a deeper understanding of the prophetic meaning of the first four feasts, we can better understand why this *"Pause"* is necessary. Naomi and Ruth arrived in the spring, just as the winter barley harvest was getting underway. This was the first harvest of a long growing season that would end with the final harvest in the fall. When they arrived from their journey both women were poor and Ruth was a stranger, a Moabite and technically an enemy of Israel. But Ruth was Naomi's daughter-in-law, and more importantly she had accepted the God of Israel as her own. So, she was welcomed by the people of Bethlehem. They arrived without support of a husband so Ruth, being the younger of the two, offered to work in the field to gather grain left after the reapers had gone through. Generally a Moabite woman would not have been accepted by an Israelite community, but a relative of Naomi, named Boaz, the owner of the field, took an interest in Ruth and offered to help her. In a way he was offering to redeem her from her fallen state. This would not have been possible had God not prepared for this day generations before by commanding Israel to leave a portion of their field unharvested and not to pick up any grain that fell on the ground as they reaped. Why? Because God reserved a portion of what He provided Israel to be shared with, ***"...the poor and for the stranger..."***. This verse, written generations before Ruth even existed, paved the way for one of the most beautiful stories in the Bible. Some might call it fate or coincidence, but it's not. It represents the total sovereign power of God over every event and every circumstance. As we will see, God used verse 22 and the barley harvest to accomplish His intended plan for the coming Messiah. The Sower who would bring God's offer of grace to the whole world.

So, why is God's action to help a foreign woman find food so important? For the answer let's quickly review what we've learned so far about the spring feasts and their Messianic prophecy to tie it all together...

The Passover

- The Passover points to Jesus, the atoning Lamb of God, who was sacrificed for the sin of the whole world. Just as God had promised Abraham, ***"I will make you a great nation [Israel]; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth [the Gentiles] shall be blessed."*** (Genesis 12:2-3 NKJV). God promised to bless Abraham as the patriarch of the Jewish nation, but through Israel God also intended to bless the Gentile nations as well. As Isaiah would proclaim, God had a plan for Israel to, ***"...give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."*** (Isaiah 49:6b NKJV). It was God's intention for Israel to share His message of sacrificial atonement for sin with the whole world. Much like He commanded Israel to share a portion of their field with strangers. Instead they hoarded the message God gave them and kept it to themselves. But God already knew that would happen so He sent Jesus, the Messiah, who didn't come as a Warrior King but came as the sacrificial Lamb of God. He also came as a Jew, and as such, the Gentile world would still be blessed through the Jewish nation. Just as God promised Abraham in Genesis 12:3 ***"...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*** But why did God do this? Very simply, ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the***

world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

(John 3:16-17 NKJV) Jesus came as a sacrifice so that through grace God's judgment would Passover the whole world. Not just the Jewish world. He came for Ruth, a Gentile, just as He did for Naomi, who was a Jew.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

- In order to offer a perfect atonement for man, Jesus came as the perfect sacrifice from God. Literally, the Lamb of God without any spot or blemish. He was the perfect, undefiled and Unleavened Bread of Life who was offered for us all.

The Feast of Firstfruits

- Jesus is the Firstfruit. The sinless offering on the cross who was resurrected from the dead. ***"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."*** (I Corinthians 15:20-23 NKJV). Jesus is the first to be resurrected to eternal life. Unlike other people in the Bible who were raised from the dead Jesus would not die again, (John 11:38-44 / Mark 5:21-43 / Luke 7:11-17). He was resurrected to life and took His place at the right hand of the Father, (Luke 24:6-7 / Mark 16:19). And as promised, Jesus will return again to usher us bodily into His presence at the Rapture when, ***"...the dead in Christ will rise..."***. (I Thessalonians 4:16 NKJV). This is a promise of things to come. A promise demonstrated by the risen and living Firstfruit Jesus.

The Feast of Pentecost

- After His resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven. Shortly thereafter the Holy Spirit came to indwell all believers, whether Jew or Gentile, and usher them together into the "church" - the unified body of Christ. This took place on the day celebrated as Pentecost, which memorialized the end of the winter barley harvest season and the beginning of summer. From a dispensational perspective this event also marked the beginning of what we now call the "Church Age", or, "The age of grace". The period of time from the ascension of the resurrected Jesus until the future Rapture of believers. The time we live in today.

The first four feasts took place in the spring of the year followed by the next three feasts in the fall. But what happened in the middle, between the fourth and fifth feast? We find the answer using a Biblical illustration from the agricultural calendar. This gap in time, the "Pause", is summer. The period of time when the initial winter barley had been harvested but other plants continue to grow to be harvested in the fall. From a Biblical perspective the summer "Pause" represents the period of time from the ascension of Jesus and the establishment of the church, until the end of the church age at the Rapture. Symbolically, the time between The Feast of Pentecost in the spring and The Feast of Trumpets in the fall is the time we live in today. The time of late sowing and growing in preparation for the final harvest - the gathering of God's

people at the Rapture. The time when believing Jews and Gentiles come together as one body in-Christ, as the church. Paul talks about this in Ephesians 3:1-7:

- ***"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. (NKJV)"***

The ***"...mystery..."*** Paul talks about here isn't the gospel. The "good news" of redemption had been known since the garden. The gospel was never a ***"...mystery..."***. Even Abel and Abraham knew righteousness came only through faith in the promised redemption of sin through a sacrifice. That's why Paul tells us in Galatians 3:8 NKJV , ***"...And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand..."***. Instead, Paul's ***"...mystery..."*** is the revealing of the "church". The profound miracle that two very separated people groups, Jews and Gentiles, become one body under Christ. The fact that, ***"...Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,..."***. (Ephesians 3:6 NKJV). Traditionally, Jews would have never accepted this idea. They were arrogantly blinded to the fact God had asked them, and prepared them, to be a light to the Gentiles by sharing His plan of redemption. Instead, they huddled in their holiness and kept God's redemptive plan to themselves. Even Naomi, whether she realized it or not, failed to be a light when she urged Ruth and Orpah to return to their idol worshiping culture. The Jews hated Gentiles and would never embrace the idea of sharing their Messiah with pagans. But God had other plans and sent Jesus into the world through the Jewish line of king David so that ***"...the world through Him might be saved."*** (John 3:17 NKJV). This is the ***"...mystery..."*** being revealed by Paul. A revelation the self-righteous Jews would not want to hear. The truth that Jews and Gentiles, once they are in-Christ, are no longer separate but are one group, one body and functioning as one church. Why? Because, ***"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*** (Galatians 3:26-29 NKJV). That's amazing. In God's eyes we as believers are neither Jew nor Gentile. We are children of God and heirs to His holy family, ***"...and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."***. (Romans 8:17a NKJV). That's the ***"...mystery..."*** Paul is talking about. The understanding that all believers are now one in-Christ. Whether we are a Naomi or a Ruth, a Jew or a Gentile, as believers we are no longer an enemy of God. We are a child of God and at the Rapture we will be a firstfruit of His harvest, ***"...those who are Christ's at His coming."*** (I Corinthians 15:23 NKJV). This is the ***"...mystery..."*** explained by Paul. But it was a truth already known by Ruth, who declared, ***"...Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God."*** (Ruth 1:16 NKJV)

This is the reason for verse 22. The Pause between the fourth and fifth feasts that represents the age of grace. The "*church age*" we are in today. Verse 22 is the provision God made so that Ruth could be redeemed by Boaz, and in doing so, demonstrates how we are redeemed by Jesus. In our lost state we were a poor stranger just like Ruth, but when we glean the field of grace we who were strangers are now rich in mercy. This is the message that all who are made in God's image can be saved and brought together as one. God doesn't arbitrarily select some to glory and some to destruction. He offers grace to all with the opportunity to glean the field of redemption through the saving grace of Jesus. Just as Boaz offered a Moabite enemy the opportunity to glean his fields and become his bride. So too, Jesus sows the gospel of grace that we may believe, take root and become His harvest at the gathering of His bride.

This is the age in which we live. The time between Pentecost and Trumpets. Between the establishment of the church and the Rapture of the bride. The time of the summer season when the end of the final harvest is nearly within sight. The time of urgency when Jesus reminds us, ***'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!'*** (John 4:35 NKJV). For two thousand years our Lord has waited patiently for us to accept His offer of grace. He's patient because ***"...The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*** (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV). The Lord waits because the harvest of Pentecost continues. He waits for billions of people like Ruth, strangers from God who are offered the opportunity to glean what He has sown. This is a time of new sowing as the gospel is spread and the growing season continues as those seeds who fall on good soil take root and blossom - being sanctified in our faith - as we await the day of our harvest.

God is not slow. He is amazingly patient. Patient for His children to sow and patient for a new crop to mature. The final harvest is not far away and is closer than it's ever been. But until then we have more sowing to do. ***"...Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*** (Matthew 9:37-38 NKJV)

The Book of Ruth

Week 6

The Feast of Trumpets

Quick Recap:

The first four feasts of Leviticus 23 took place in the spring. A time from sowing to reaping the first crop of winter barley. But after spring comes summer. When more sowing and growing occurs before the final harvest in the fall. As we've seen, these agricultural feasts also point prophetically to Jesus. He is the Unleavened Passover Lamb, who gave His perfect life for the redemption of sin. Then, after His death Jesus rose again as the Firstfruit, and His resurrection and subsequent return to heaven ushered in the "*church age*" at Pentecost. The time we live in today when "***The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few...***" (Matthew 9:37a NKJV). This is the sequence of events foretold by the Passover, The Feast of Unleavened Bread, The Feast of Firstfruits and The Feast of Pentecost. But after the fourth festival there is a gap between events - a "*Pause*" - while the summer fields mature in preparation for the final harvest in the fall. Mankind has been in this season for over two-thousand years, but the time draws near when the Sower will return to gather His beloved crop. The harvest of souls who are His own.

Now, let's move beyond the "*Pause*" to the fall. To the first of the last three festivals that have yet to be fulfilled - The Feast of Trumpets.

- 1. The Passover
- 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 3. The Feast of Firstfruits (Fruits of the Harvest)
- 4. The Feast of Pentecost (also, The Feast of Weeks)
- The Pause
- 5. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
 - 6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
 - 7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Trumpets

- Modern Rosh Hashanah. The Jewish New Year
- Occurs in the Jewish month of Tishri
- Fall: September - October
- Leviticus 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. (NKJV)'"***
- Future Fulfillment

The Feast of Trumpets is the first feast observed in the fall and marks the conclusion of the long, hot growing season of summer. It takes place on the first day of the Jewish month of Tishri, which falls within the months of September and October. In modern times it is also celebrated as the Jewish New Year. A time of self-inspection and prayer, and a time for renewal and fresh starts. The Feast of Trumpets and the next feast, the Day of Atonement, are very sacred events in Judaism and are sometimes called "*The days of awe*". But to us, followers of Christ, they are also days of great prophetic significance. Prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled.

Requirements for the Feast of Trumpets are found in Leviticus 23:23-25, but also in Numbers 29:1-6 ***"And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of blowing the trumpets. You shall offer a burnt offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord: one young bull, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish. Their grain offering shall be fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for the bull, two-tenths for the ram, and one-tenth for each of the seven lambs; also one kid of the goats as a sin offering, to make atonement for you; besides the burnt offering with its grain offering for the New Moon, the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings, according to their ordinance, as a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord."*** (NKJV)

Trumpets were blown to announce the fall harvest. A joyous time after the long summer season when the bounty of the field was gathered. The Jewish *Mishnah* (not scripture) provides a few more details based on Rabbinical teaching. (See footnote below). It's believed the horns of animals were used as trumpets. Not silver horns like those used in the temple (Numbers 10:1-2). Ox and calf horns were probably not used because they reminded Israel of their disobedience with the golden calf, ***"...And Aaron said to them, 'Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!'"*** (Exodus 32:2-4 NKJV). Instead, it's

believed a ram's horn was most often used as the trumpet. Possibly because it could be linked back to the sacrifice provided by the Lord as a substitute for Isaac, **"...Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son."** (Genesis 22:13 NKJV).

Although not specifically outlined in the Bible, Jewish tradition states the feast reminds Israel of several significant things:

1. The Creator
2. The duty to return to God
3. The revelation on Mount Sinai
4. The message of the prophets
5. The destruction of the temple
6. The binding of Isaac
7. Imminent danger
8. The day of judgment
9. The redemption of Israel
10. The resurrection

But from a prophetic viewpoint The Feast of Trumpets points to a future harvest. Commentators differ on their interpretations so we'll cover two principal views of what The Feast of Trumpets represents:

- The gathering of the church at the Rapture
- The regathering of Israel at the Second Coming.

We'll review both views here.

The Rapture View

From the perspective of the church the Rapture is when the redeemed crop of the earth will be gathered by the Lord. The time when Jesus will return to gather His bride - the church. An event spoken of by Paul, **"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 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."** (I Corinthians 15:51-52 NKJV). This passage describes the "Rapture", not the "Second Coming" (Revelation 19:11). The Rapture is the time when Jesus will return in the clouds to gather His bride and take her home, **"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."** (I Thessalonians 4:15-18 NKJV). The Second Coming is a later event when Jesus will return as the Warrior King to avenge His fallen creation and regather His nation of Israel into His earthly Kingdom (Revelation 19:11). Please don't confuse the two events.

The Rapture is a harvest. The future fulfillment of the beautiful promise made by Jesus to His followers, ***"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*** (John 14:2-3 NKJV). This speaks to, ***"...the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him..."*** described in 2 Thessalonians 2:1 (NKJV). The day when believers will be gathered by the Sower and transformed into our glorified eternal state. ***"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. [the Rapture] The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body"*** (1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NKJV) The Rapture is the final outcome of centuries of sowing the seeds of the gospel and the harvest of the field of believers we are all waiting for. The gathering of believers who have waited through a long hot summer for the harvest of souls. But until then, the summer, the ***"Pause"*** in verse 22 (Week #5), has given time for us to plant new seeds so they can grow and mature and be made ready for the final harvest in the fall. This is the length of time Peter spoke of when he said, ***"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise [to return], as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*** (2 Peter 3:9 NKJV) The Lord has given us a long summer season so that more seed might be planted and more crops can mature so the harvest can be full.

At The Feast of Pentecost (Week #4) the Holy Spirit established the church and ushered in the ***"Age of Grace"***. This is the time we live in now; the summer season. The ***"Pause"*** between events when new seeds are planted and more crops grow and mature to become the crop of new believers who accept Christ prior to the fall harvest of the Rapture. It's a time of continuous sowing as the gospel is spread throughout the world. A time when we as believers become laborers for the Sower to spread seed while we can. That's why Paul reminds us in Romans 13:11-12, ***"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation [Rapture] is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."*** (NKJV). This is the task we are given during the Age of Grace. To armor up and be a light. To share God's plan of redemptive grace with a dark world so that a larger crop can be harvested. This is why we must ***"...awake out of sleep..."***, snap-out of our comfort zone and share the gospel of Jesus with those who are quickly running out of time before the trumpet sounds.

Israel's Gathering View

Israel is a people chosen by God to be His nation, ***"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.*** (Deuteronomy 7:6 NKJV) But Israel wasn't chosen because of their riches, size or military might. In fact, God was very clear, ***"The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;*** (Deuteronomy 7:7 NKJV). Israel

was chosen to carry God's redemptive plan of forgiveness to the world, ***"Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' "*** (Isaiah 49:6 NKJV). They were supposed to accomplish the task originally given to the future Israel through Abraham, ***"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*** (Genesis 12:3 NKJV). But Israel failed ***"...all the families of the earth..."*** and rather than sharing God's plan of redemption they held it close and over-complicated His message. As a result of their disobedience, Israel was scattered throughout the world and persecuted wherever they settled.

But in 1948 something extraordinary happened. Once again, Israel became a sovereign nation. And since that time they have grown culturally, economically and militarily as their people have regathered from around the world to repopulate God's chosen land. For over 2,000 years Israel lay bare and was largely uninhabited but now they are a vibrant, strong and economically stable nation. But there's a problem. The same problem Israel had over 2,000 years ago. They still fail to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. This is particularly sad given the fact we have the benefit of historical hindsight and can look back on the Lord's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and hear the heartbreak in His voice as He reflects on the rejection of His chosen people, ***"Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."*** (Luke 19:41-44 NKJV). Israel had their chance and failed miserably. The Messiah had come in the guise of a common Carpenter. He healed the sick, raised the dead and fulfilled prophecy right before their eyes. But almost no one recognized Him for who He is - the Messiah - God in flesh. So Israel was destroyed in 70 AD and laid in ruin until 1948. And yet even today, with all the prosperity they have seen, Israel still refuses to accept Jesus.

But that will change. A time will come when a final remnant of Israel will recognize their King and be regathered to Him. The time described in the Book of Revelation called the Tribulation. Although the Tribulation will bring judgment on the whole world, the prime directive of God will be to regather the remnant of Israel to Him. That's why Jeremiah called the Tribulation the ***"...time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble..."***, when he spoke of the day when Jesus returns to claim what is His, ***"...Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it."*** (Jeremiah 30:7 NKJV). This is the time of our Lord's Second Coming. When He will return with His bride to bring judgment on the world, ***"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses."*** (Revelation 19:11-14 NKJV). This is not the Rapture when

Jesus comes as the loving Groom to gather His bride. This is the Second Coming when Jesus comes as a Warrior Judge to enact God's final judgment. But it is also the time when the remnant of Israel will understand the treachery of the antichrist and finally recognize Jesus as the true Messiah, **"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."** (Zechariah 12:10 NKJV). Yet, sadly, by that point only one-third of Israel will have survived, **"And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the Lord, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'"** (Zechariah 13:8-9 NKJV). It is the one-third who will regather to Jesus. A harvest of His chosen crop who will eventually say, **"...The Lord is my God..."**. The time when **"...Then the Lord will be seen over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord God will blow the trumpet, And go with whirlwinds from the south."** (Zechariah 9:14 NKJV). The day when God will, **"...Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the Lord is coming, For it is at hand..."** (Joel 2:1 NKJV). This is not the trumpet of man. Neither the silver trumpet of the temple nor the ram's horn *shofar* . This will be the trumpet of God. Reminding us of John's view of Jesus in Revelation 1, **"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, saying, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,'..."** (Revelation 1:10-11a NKJV).

Whichever view you choose, the gathering of the bride or the regathering of Israel, our praise should be the same, **"...And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."** (Revelation 22:17 NKJV)

Yes, please come Lord Jesus. We are ready.

- Footnote: The *Mishnah*, which in Hebrew means "*study by repetition*" is a collection of Jewish oral traditions that were documented by approximately 120 rabbis in the 2nd/3rd century AD. This was a time of great persecution for the Jews and there was concern their oral history would be lost.

The Book of Ruth

Week 7

The Day of Atonement

Quick Recap

In ancient Israel four feasts were observed in the spring. Each had a specific religious focus but as we have seen they also present a clear sequence of Messianic prophecies:

- Jesus is the slain Lamb of *Passover*
- He is the Lamb with no sin who is the *Unleavened Bread* of Life
- He is the resurrected *Firstfruit* of the harvest
- He is the One whose ascension back to heaven ushered in the Holy Spirit at *Pentecost* and set in motion the "*Church Age*".
- Then after *Pentecost* comes a long hot summer. A "*Pause*" (my term) between feasts while new seed is planted and crops grow and mature (Leviticus 22:23). This is the time we live in today.
- After the summer *Pause* comes fall and the final harvest. This points to a future time announced by the sound of *Trumpets* when Jesus will return to gather those who accepted Him as their Lord. This includes the Raptured bride and the remnant of Israel who finally believe.

Now, let's explore the sixth feast; the second feast of fall. Another prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. The Day of Atonement.

- 1. The Passover
 - 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - 3. The Feast of Firstfruits (Fruits of the Harvest)
 - 4. The Feast of Pentecost (also, The Feast of Weeks)
 - The Pause
 - 5. The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)
6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)
- 7. The Feast of Tabernacles

The Day of Atonement

- Yom Kippur
- Occurs in the Jewish month of Tishri
- Fall: September - October
- Leviticus 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 to you 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."*** (NKJV)
- Future Fulfillment

God gave the priests of Israel very specific instructions for making offerings in the Tabernacle. These ceremonies were extremely important to God and were supposed to be carried out exactly how He had commanded. But that was not always the case. Leviticus chapter 10 chronicles the tragic story of Nadab and Abihu, sons of the high priest Aaron. For some reason they made an improper offering to God when, ***"...each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord..."*** (Leviticus 10:1 NKJV). Their actions violated specific instructions God had given Israel for the offering of incense (Exodus 30:34-38 NKJV), and although the Bible allowed the priests to make this type of offering, Nadab and Abihu apparently did so using the wrong method or with the wrong attitude which was considered to be a ***"...profane fire before the Lord..."***. The consequence of their action was swift and tragic, ***"...So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."*** (Leviticus 10:2 NKJV). This is particularly sad considering they were two sons of Aaron, and nephews of Moses who had been consecrated for service as priests. Even so, God destroyed the two priests who had made a ***"...profane..."*** offering before Him. He then reminded Aaron of the seriousness of the offerings and the temple activities, ***"And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. You shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses."*** (Leviticus 10:6-7 NKJV). This was the precise level of perfect obedience required by God:

- ***"By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified."*** (Leviticus 10:3b NKJV)

Absolute obedience from the priests was demanded by God. First, because it showed reverence and obedience to His will, but also because the attitude and actions of the priest (in essence, their testimony) was a way of teaching the people about God's expectations. Just as the Lord commanded Aaron, ***“Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.”*** (Leviticus 10:9-11 NKJV)

But the priests of Israel were human, and as such they sinned just like everyone else. As a result, the high priest was required to offer a sacrifice for his own sin before he offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. Then he offered a sacrifice to cleanse the Tabernacle and its furnishings because they had been made unclean by man's presence. But even the high priest was restricted from coming behind the veil and into the Holy of Holies (the most holy part of the Tabernacle) except on a certain day. If he came at any other time he would die, ***“Now the Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the Lord, and died; and the Lord said to Moses: “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat. “Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering.”*** (Leviticus 16:1-3 NKJV). There was one day the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies to seek forgiveness for the people. That was the most important day of the year - The Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement took place on the tenth day of the month of Tishri, and is considered one of the most holy days on the Jewish calendar. Its name comes from the Hebrew "Yom HaKippurim" which is framed around the root word "kippurim" or "atonement", which basically means "to ransom by paying a price.". The Feast occurs in the fall of the year and after the harvest. For seven days the high priest conducted many sacred activities; ceremonial washings, frequent change of clothing, multiple offerings and many sacrifices. Including the offering of two goats for sin - one that was slain and the other, who symbolically carried the sin of the people, was released into the wilderness as a "scapegoat". ***“Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. 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.”*** (Leviticus 16:6-10 NKJV).

The Day of Atonement was such a complicated process it might help if we read its instructions in their entirety:

- ***“And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering***

*which is for himself. Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die. He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. And he shall go out to the altar that is before the Lord, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. "Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there. And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people. The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal. Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. (Leviticus 16:11-28 NKJV / see also Numbers 29:7-11) Exact adherence to these instructions was expected because the priest's obedience glorified God. From these details we can better understand why the hurried offering of Nadab and Abihu was considered **"profane..."**.*

Leviticus 23 gives additional instructions that were not only for the priests but for the people, ***"...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." (Leviticus 23:27-30 NKJV) The day was considered a sabbath which meant no work was to be done. Instead, each person was expected to **"...afflict your souls..."**. This required a sincere focus on fasting, prayer, humility, self-denial and confession in order to seek redemption for your sin. In essence it meant being broken before God over your sin as you sought forgiveness through faith represented by the blood sacrifice. Just as we are saved by confessing our sins to God through our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. In that context, James gives us a view of what this means so we can apply it to our own lives, **"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."** (James 4:8-10 NKJV). So why would God expect our **"...laughter be turned to mourning..."** and our **"...joy to gloom..."**? Because, our sin separates us from God and deserves His wrath. That's why salvation is not simply believing about Jesus, but requires us to understand His role on the cross as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. It was our sin that put Jesus on the cross, so just thinking about it is enough to cause our **"...laughter be turned to mourning..."**.

But there was an inherent problem with the Tabernacle offerings because both the animal and the priest were imperfect. That meant the priest had to first make an offering for his own sin before he could make an offering for the people's sin. And since both the sacrifice and the priest were imperfect the forgiveness they brought was temporary and the sacrifice had to be repeated over and over and year after year. As unpleasant as all of this may sound it reveals the seriousness of sin, and the seriousness of forgiveness. So serious in fact, that forgiveness requires the sacrifice of an animal that had no blemish of its own. Because atonement requires faith in a blood sacrifice for sin

So in that context what does the Day of Atonement point to?

There are two common views.

First View:

The Tabernacle sacrifice was for the atonement of sin by a payment made in blood. But as we've already discussed, the Day of Atonement payment was temporary, because both the sacrifice and the priest were blemished. But God used the Tabernacle offering to illustrate the permanent atonement that would be made possible through a perfect Sacrifice. A Sacrifice that needed no priest because the perfect Sacrifice was also the perfect Priest. So God sent Jesus to be the perfect Sacrifice, the perfect Unleavened Lamb of God without spot or blemish. Just as Abraham had foreseen centuries before in the substitutionary sacrifice for Isaac when he declared, **"...God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering."** (Genesis 22:8 NKJV) This was a prophetic reference to the Messiah who would become the resurrected sacrifice and who would fulfill the promise of Genesis 12:3 **"...And in you all the families of**

the earth shall be blessed.”. The world would be blessed because Jesus was a sacrifice that came from God...not from man. And as such, He is the ultimate atoning sacrifice. A picture of which was presented in the blood of the lamb sacrificed for the people in the Tabernacle that pointed to the coming Messiah. But Israel failed to see the connection between the Messiah and the earthly sacrifice so God sent the Messiah as a heavenly sacrifice. That's why it is Jesus who ***"...became flesh and dwelt among us..."*** (John 1:14 NKJV). He dwelt among us as a sinless man in order to become the sinless Unleavened Lamb offered by the sinless Priest. It was also His sacrifice that fulfilled the promise made so long ago in Isaiah 53:5-6 NKJV ***"...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all..."*** Jesus is the Lamb, promised by God. Not for the annual atonement of one people but to cover the trillions upon trillions of sins of all people. God's Lamb promised to Abraham is Jesus as declared by His forerunner John the Baptist who said, ***"... "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (John 1:29 NKJV) Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice because He is the only Unblemished Lamb given by God to die for the sin of mankind.

But Jesus' death is different than all the other sacrifices because He is both the perfect Sacrifice and the perfect Priest. As Hebrews 4:14 confirms, ***"...Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God..."*** (NKJV). As the Great High Priest Jesus didn't have to offer a Sacrifice for His own sin because He had none. So His Sacrifice was fully applied to us, ***"...For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."*** (Hebrews 7:26-27 NKJV). As the perfect Great High Priest, Jesus offered Himself as the perfect Sacrifice on the altar of God - on the cross - for the sin of mankind. That's why He is the perfect ***"...Lamb of God..."***; the ultimate gift of grace. And unlike the temple sacrifice for atonement that had to be repeated over and over, the sacrifice of Jesus brought permanent atonement for anyone with faith in Him and His work on the cross, ***"...For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another— He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."*** (Hebrews 9:24-28 NKJV)

It was Jesus who brought the ultimate sacrifice through His own blood ***"...For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."*** (Leviticus 17:11 NKJV)

So that:

- ***"...He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:13-14 NKJV)***
- ***"...In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace..." (Ephesians 1:7 NKJV)***
- ***"...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7 NKJV)***
- ***"...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Peter 1:19 NKJV)***

This is Jesus. Not the lamb of man, a blemished and temporary sacrifice, but the ***"...Lamb of God..."***, a sinless, perfect and permanent sacrifice in every way. And as the perfect Sacrifice and the perfect High Priest the day of our salvation becomes a day of atonement for us. A truth so beautifully summarized in Hebrews 9:11-14 NKJV, ***"...But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"***

The sacrifice of the All Holy ***"...Lamb of God..."*** is the *"Crimson Thread"*. God's consistent message that redemption only comes through blood that is shed for the forgiveness of sin. It is the thread of blood running through every vein of God's word.

It is the gospel:

- The gospel is the bruised Seed in Genesis 3:15,
- The gospel is the firstborn of Abel's flock in Genesis 4:4
- The gospel is the lamb of Abraham in Genesis 22:8
- The gospel is the spotless Passover lamb in Exodus 12:3
- The gospel is the lamb of the Tabernacle in Leviticus 3:1
- The gospel is the Unleavened Bread In Leviticus 23:6
- The gospel is the Redeemer in Job 19:25
- The gospel is the crucified Messiah in Psalm 22:1
- The gospel is the One pierced for us in Isaiah 53:5
- The gospel is the Great High Priest in Hebrews 4:14
- The gospel is the Feast of Firstfruits in 1 Corinthians 15:20
- The gospel is the sweet aroma in Ephesians 5:2
- The gospel is the ***"...The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** In John 1:29 NKJV
- The gospel is the ***"...Lamb as though it had been slain..."*** in Revelation 5:6 NKJV
- The gospel is the Lamb standing on Mount Zion in Revelation 14:1

So the lamb who gave his life in the Tabernacle for the sins of Israel was a representation of the **"...Lamb..."** that would give His life on the cross for the sins of mankind, **"...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."** (Matthew 20:28 NKJV). And when that happened everything changed. The veil that separated the inner temple from the Holy of Holies was torn down by God, **"...Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, "Truly this Man was the Son of God!"** (Mark 15:38-39 NKJV). This would forever remove the physical barrier between man and the inner sanctum of God. That's why as believers we can enter through Jesus and are invited to **"...come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."** (Hebrews 4:16 NKJV)

Hallelujah!

Throughout the entire Bible - The story is the same. Sin must be paid for in blood. In the Old Testament atonement was made by looking forward to the Messiah through the lamb of man. In the New Testament atonement is made by looking back to the Messiah through faith in the **"...Lamb of God..."**. The story is the same. The story is Jesus.

Thank You Lord.

Second View:

But sadly, and despite God's desire for Israel to obediently observe His sacrificial requirements for the atonement of sin, they became hyper-religious and self-righteous. Which is not at all what God wanted, as He had warned them, **"But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. 'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. 'And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the**

enemy. When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you. I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas. I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. 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. 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 26:14-35 NKJV). As harsh as this punishment may sound it was necessary because Israel repeatedly rebelled and suffered through many cycles of obedience and disobedience. So God punished them. Through famine and plague, through exile to the Assyrians and Babylonians, and even through conquest by Egypt, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. But even after their redemption and return to their homeland they would fail over and over again. Probably no more so than in the early first century AD when God initiated His plan for permanent atonement. That's when the **"Lamb of God"**, the Unleavened Bread of Life was born in a manger in Bethlehem. An event foretold by the prophet Micah, but missed by the people of Israel who failed to see their Deliverer in flesh, **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."** (Micah 5:2 NKJV) Even though they were told the Messiah was coming they failed to recognize Him because of their fallen condition. Not because they worshiped false gods, but by this point they basically worshiped themselves. They had become so enamored with their own religious self-righteousness that they were looking for a warrior king, not for a King in the guise of a lowly Carpenter. So unlike the people who stood at the Tabernacle to watch the lamb be slain for their atonement, they stood before Jesus and **"...shouted, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!'"** (Luke 23:21 NKJV). And in doing so the Lamb would be slain.

Because of their rejection, punishment would come. Severe punishment. In 70 AD the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem and hundreds of Israelite cities and villages. Millions were killed and the survivors were scattered throughout the world. Just as God had promised, **"But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?' Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them.'"** (1 Kings 9:6-9 NKJV)

For two thousand years the nation of Israel basically ceased to exist. But God, in His infinite mercy, reached out to bring His people back to their land so that in 1948 the Nation of Israel was once again recognized as a sovereign nation and from then until now it has become the homeland of God's chosen people. But...they are still in a cycle of disobedience because they have collectively refused to recognize the Carpenter from Bethlehem as the Messiah. But that will change. After the *Trumpets* sound signaling the coming harvest, God will bring punishment on all creation. This will be the time of Tribulation spoken of in several books of the Bible but primarily in Daniel and Revelation. Although the entire post-Rapture world will fall under God's wrath, the seven year time of Tribulation will focus on the redemption of Israel - or at least its remnant. That's why Jeremiah called it **"...the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble..."** (Jeremiah 30:7 NKJV). Initially Israel will follow the antichrist, thinking he is the Messiah, **"...Then he shall confirm a covenant with many [Israel] for one week; [one "week" in eschatological terms means seven years] But in the middle of the week [after three and a half years] He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate."** (Daniel 9:27 NKJV). In summary, Daniel is saying, the antichrist, a future global leader, will form a treaty with Israel and allow them to rebuild the temple and reestablish the ancient sacrificial system. But at the midpoint of the seven year treaty the antichrist will enter the temple and declare himself to be a god. When that happens Israel will realize their mistake and finally recognize that their Messiah is the homeless Carpenter from Nazareth. The one they crucified. The atoning Lamb of God. That is when Israel will finally turn to Jesus as their Savior, **"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."** (Zechariah 12:10 NKJV)

The Tribulation will be a tough time for Israel. So tough that only one-third will survive, **"...And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the Lord, "That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die..."**, but those who are left will accept Jesus as the Messiah, **"...But one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.' "** (Zechariah 13:8-9 NKJV). This will be the great Day of Atonement for the believing remnant of Israel, **"And it shall come to pass in that day That the Lord will thresh, From the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; And you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, And shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem."** (Isaiah 27:12-13 NKJV). Just as God retrieved the remnant of Israel from Assyria He will retrieve them from the hands of the antichrist. This will be a day of final victory. A Day of Atonement. The day when **"...“The Lord will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the**

Lord before them. It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. (Zechariah 12:7-9 NKJV)

On that day the armies of the antichrist will come against Jerusalem, ***"...For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south."*** (Zechariah 14:2-4 NKJV). And on that day the prophecy of Job will be fulfilled, ***"...For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;"*** (Job 19:25 NKJV). The same event John has already foreseen, ***"Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion..."*** (Revelation 14:1a NKJV)

But Jerusalem will be defended by the Lamb who is also the Lion, who will come like a battering-ram against the satan-led armies of the world and Israel will be redeemed, ***"...Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh."*** (Revelation 19:11-21 NKJV)

No greater battle will ever be fought. No greater victory will ever be won. As with the body of Christ who will be gathered by Jesus, so too will the remnant of believing Israel be gathered as well. What a glorious day both of those events will be.

The Book of Ruth

Week 8

The Feast of Tabernacles And Recap

Quick Recap

We've come to the end of our quick survey of the agricultural Feasts of Leviticus chapter 23. Let's review what we've learned so far:

- 1. The Passover
 - Jesus is the slain Lamb of *Passover* who shed His blood for the atonement of sin.
- 2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - Jesus is the Lamb with no sin who is the *Unleavened Bread* of Life.
- 3. The Feast of Firstfruits
 - Jesus is the resurrected *Firstfruit* of the harvest, who makes a way for the future resurrection of His followers.
- 4. The Feast of Pentecost
 - Jesus' ascension back to heaven ushered in the Holy Spirit at *Pentecost* and set in motion the "*Church Age*". This event began the time period we live in today.
- The Pause
 - After *Pentecost* comes a break. A "*Pause*" (my term) between the first four feasts and the last three. A time when new seed is planted and crops grow and mature. (Leviticus 23:22). Prophetically, God has allowed this period of time to exist for over 2,000 years so that we, the sowers for Jesus, have time to plant more seed.
- 5. The Feast of Trumpets
 - After the summer *Pause* comes fall and the final harvest. This points to a future time announced by the sound of *Trumpets* when Jesus will return to gather His faithful believers..
- 6. The Day of Atonement
 - After the harvest comes a time of reflection to **"...afflict your souls..."** (Leviticus 23:32 NKJV). On that day Israel focused on the atonement of sin. But prophetically, after the future Rapture of the believing church, a seven year period of affliction will begin. A time known as the Tribulation when God will focus both wrath - and grace - on the entire post-Rapture world. But God's primary concern will be the redemption of Israel's remnant when they finally recognize Jesus as the Messiah on *The Day of Atonement*.

The first four Feasts have already been fulfilled, but the last three will be fulfilled at a future time known only to God. These will begin with the Rapture, continue through the time of Tribulation and finally culminate in the glorious Millennial Kingdom of our Lord.

Now let's look at the seventh feast, The Feast of Tabernacles. The final feast whose prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.

The Feast of Tabernacles

- Occurs in the Jewish month of Tishri
- Fall: September - October
- Leviticus 23:33-44
 - ***"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. 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. '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. '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. 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. 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. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, 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.' "*** So Moses declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord." (NKJV)
 - Refer to Numbers 29:12-39 for another detailed explanation.
- Future Fulfillment

The Feast of Tabernacles, or "*Sukot*" in Hebrew, is also called "*The Feast of Ingathering*" (Exodus 23:16) and took place starting on the 15th day of the month of Tishri. As with the two previous unfulfilled feasts, "*Trumpets*" and "*Atonement*", Tabernacles will occur in the seventh month of the year. Seven is a prominent number in the description of the feast. Traditionally the number seven, which is commonly used throughout the Bible, is associated with "*completeness*", so as we explore its prophetic meaning that will make perfect sense. Tabernacles was a time of great joy, when the hard work of planting, growing and reaping was complete and the storehouses were full of freshly harvested crop. Israel could now look at the land and its fruit and give thanks to God for making it all possible. They would also look back to the Passover sacrifice as a reminder of their redemption from Egypt. They would recall the bread for the journey made with no leaven (sin), and they would thank God for the Firstfruits of

winter barley followed by the long summer that brought the final harvest in the fall. This was a time of great rejoicing for the entire community, ***"You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. 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. 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 NKJV)

Based on what we've learned through the first six feasts I think we can already begin to see how the final prophecy will come together.

But first, let's start with an historical perspective by looking at a very unique requirement in Leviticus 23, ***"...You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, 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 23:42-43 NKJV).

So what exactly are ***"...booths..."***? The term comes from the Hebrew word *"sukkah"* which is translated into English as ***"...booths..."***. It describes a small, temporary structure that can be quickly assembled. Think of it like a tent made of branches, leaves and similar material. Living in the booth during the feast commemorated the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. It was a long difficult journey for Israel when they had no permanent home or cities and instead lived in tents, ***"The children of Israel shall pitch their tents, everyone by his own camp, everyone by his own standard, according to their armies;"*** (Numbers 1:52 NKJV) Even the Tabernacle itself was initially a temporary structure that could be moved from camp to camp and therefore was sometimes called *"The Tent of Meeting"*

- ***"On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting."*** (Exodus 40:2 NKJV)
- ***"...but you shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, over all its furnishings, and over all things that belong to it; they shall carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; they shall attend to it and camp around the tabernacle."*** (Numbers 1:50 NKJV).

We see reference to how the ***"...booths..."*** were constructed in another description of The Feast of Tabernacles found in the Book of Nehemiah,

- ***And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or***

the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness." (Nehemiah 8:14-17 NKJV)

The ***"...booths..."*** where each family would live during the seven day feast not only reminded Israel of the hardships of their journey, but also of the provision God provided to sustain them on the long trek, ***"Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness; They lacked nothing; Their clothes did not wear out And their feet did not swell."*** (Nehemiah 9:21 NKJV).

The ***"...booths..."*** reminded Israel of the life they lived prior to arriving in the Promised Land. Likewise, the Feast of Tabernacles was an occasion for Israel to look back on their history. To reflect on the *Passover* event that first identified them as a nation, when God atoned their sin and brought them out of Egypt and eventually into their own land. But it is also a view into the future when God will fulfill His promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:3 NKJV) ***"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*** (Genesis 12:3 NKJV). A prophecy that was intended to be fulfilled by Israel when God made them, ***"...a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."*** (Isaiah 49:6 NKJV) but was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus, ***"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*** (John 3:17 NKJV).

How tragic it is that after all this time Israel still does not recognize the Messiah prophesied by these Feasts. And yet, even more tragic is the fact they didn't recognize the Messiah when they saw Him face to face, heard His voice and saw His miracles. We see this no more clearly than in John's description of what happened during a particular Feast of Tabernacles over two thousand years ago. As part of the Feast a ceremony was held each morning when the priests would bring water from the fountain of Siloam and pour it in a basin near the altar. It was an offering to God for providing life-giving water for the people and the land. This initiated a joyous celebration with trumpet blasts and singing of the Hallel (Psalm 113-118). A celebration to commemorate the words of Isaiah, ***"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.' " Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation."*** (Isaiah 12:2-3 NKJV). But on that day, the seventh day of the feast, "*Hoshana Rabbath*", Jesus Himself was in the on-looking crowd and watched the priest pour the water offering. Then something extraordinary happened:

- ***"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. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."***
- ***But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ***

come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him. (John 7:37-44 NKJV)

Here, during the Feast of Tabernacles and within earshot of thousands Jesus declared:

- He is the ***"...living water..."*** they seek.
- He was their cloud in the day, ***"And the cloud of the Lord was above them by day when they went out from the camp."*** (Numbers 10:34 NKJV)
- Their fire at night, ***"And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night."*** (Exodus 13:21 NKJV),
- And as the Bread of Life Jesus was their manna from heaven, ***"And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan."*** (Exodus 16:35 NKJV) — ***"Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven."***(John 6:32 NKJV)
- And the life giving water flowing from the rock, ***"And they did not thirst When He led them through the deserts; He caused the waters to flow from the rock for them; He also split the rock, and the waters gushed out."*** (Isaiah 48:21 NKJV)

And yet, only a few believed and realized ***"This is the Christ"***. Sadly, the majority rejected Him.

So what is the prophetic message of Tabernacles? For one, the apostle Paul reminds us that we, as believers in Christ, are also wandering sojourners headed to our Promised Land. Our earthly bodies will one day be glorified in heaven, but until then we inhabit a ***"...booth..."*** of our own, our earthly body, ***"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."*** (2 Corinthians 5:1 NKJV) That's because as followers of Christ we are no longer of this world (John 17:16) but we remain here for a time to share the message of Jesus. And as we do, we too can look back on our King, the *Passover* Lamb, who is the sinless *Unleavened* Bread of Life. Who gave His life for us, was resurrected as the *Firstfruit* of our Rapture to come, and who has filled us with the Holy Spirit at *Pentecost* until the *Trumpets* sound and He returns to take us home. But to fulfill this promise Jesus made a journey as well. He came to earth in His own temporary tent when ***"...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."*** (John 1:14a NKJV). Here John uses the Greek word for ***"...dwelt..."***, *"skēnos"* which refers to pitching a tent. The same word Paul used to describe our earthly body in 2 Corinthians 5:1. In other words, when God came to earth as man He too lived in a booth of sorts - a temporary Tabernacle among men.

But a day will come when Jesus brings His kingdom to earth. After the Rapture of the bride and after the atonement of Israel's remnant Jesus will rule on earth for a thousand years before creating a new eternity for His faithful. The time we see in Revelation 20, ***"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. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 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 20:4-6 NKJV). This is the time of the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus will reign. A time spoken of by Zachariah

- ***"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles."*** (Zechariah 14:16 NKJV)

A time when Israel shall be regathered to Jesus, and along with His bride, rule on earth.

- ***"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east And from the land of the west; I will bring them back, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.'"*** (Zechariah 8:7-8 NKJV)

A time when Paul's declaration will be fulfilled,

- ***"...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*** (Philippians 2:10-11 NKJV)

A time when the whole world will look to Israel as a nation of God. And as prophesied in Genesis 12:3, ***"...all the families of the earth shall be blessed."***

- ***"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'*** (Zechariah 8:23 NKJV)

And yet, even the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus will be a temporary home. After one thousand years of His reign on earth our Lord will recreate a New Heaven, a New Earth and a New Jerusalem for us. Why? Because a repaired home will not be sufficient for His bride because the current heaven, earth and Jerusalem have been marred by sin. So Jesus will create everything new for us. That way we will never live in temporary ***"...booths..."*** again, but will live in the permanent and eternal place prepared for us. (John 14:3). What a glorious eternity that will be when Jesus proclaims who He is as He did so long ago in Jerusalem. But this time everyone in the crowd will believe.

- ***"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe***

away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.” (Revelation 21:1-6 NKJV)

And we will thirst no more. Thank You Jesus.

Recap:

- The Book of Ruth is a unique love story
- What first appears to be the chronicle of a Moabite widow becomes a clear Messianic prophecy
- And through Ruth we see the decision every person must make
 - Orpah who rejected
 - And Ruth who accepted
 - **“Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.”** (Ruth 1:16 NKJV)
- Through Ruth and Boaz we see a picture of an enemy redeemed by a compassionate kinsman
- Just as we are redeemed by Jesus who gives us a new life through our faith in Him
- But Ruth also provides a unique connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament
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 - The provision for a Kinsman Redeemer in Deuteronomy 25:5-10
 - The provision to glean in the fields in accordance with Leviticus 19:9-10 / 23:22
 - The marriage of Ruth the Moabite Gentile to Boaz the Jewish landowner
 - Through their son Obed to king David to Jesus
 - As recorded in Matthew chapter 1
- And through Ruth we can see what Phillip saw – **“We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”** (John 1:45 NKJV)
- I pray this study has given you a greater appreciation for Jesus in the Old Testament, and the yearning to go there and find Him.