

**Message #41****Leviticus 23:1-8**

This chapter is the most exhaustive discussion of the Israelite feast days in all of the Bible. In this chapter there are two things that are repeated over and over again: 1) “Appointed times” - 2, 4, 37, 44; 2) “Holy convocation” - 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, 35, 36, 37. If we consider the actual meaning of these words in Hebrew, the main combined idea is **set points of time when the assembly is called together for sacred purposes** (Gesenius, pp. 457-458, 504). We will notice that in each occurrence of the term “holy convocation” is also a specific admonition that no one was to do any work (3, 7, 8, 21, 25, 28, 35, 36). So these were days when God’s people were to stop their normal work so they could focus their attention on God and sacred things.

**IF GOD’S PEOPLE ARE TO BE HOLY, THEY MUST STOP WORK AND GATHER TOGETHER ON CERTAIN DAYS FOR SACRED PURPOSES.**

Although we are now in the Age of Grace in which we are not required to keep Sabbath day observances, we do have a N.T. mandate which says, “and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” God wants His people taking time out of their work schedules to focus their attention on Him and on sacred things. God wants His people gathering together for sacred purposes and even though the habit of some is not to do this, it is a critical key to stimulation to holiness as we near the coming of Christ.

Now when it came to the nation Israel, there were at least three reasons why God wanted His people to gather together on certain days:

**Reason #1** – The Primary Reason – to focus Israel’s attention on God and sacred things that pertained to Him. Holy days caused Israel to focus on holy things.

**Reason #2** – The Practical Reason – to bring the people together so there could be a day in which the people could collectively unite and fellowship with one another.

**Reason #3** – The Prophetic Reason – these sacred days have prophetic significance to Jesus Christ:

- 1) Passover – Christ’s crucifixion; 2) Unleavened Bread – Fellowship with Christ;
- 3) First Fruits – Resurrection of Christ; 4) Pentecost – Church begins Christ is head; 5) Trumpets – Israel brought back to land with Christ as King;
- 6) Atonement – All of Christ’s sin work on the Cross; 7) Tabernacles – Israel in the land.

**OBSERVATION #1** – God is the One who established the idea of special days. **23:1-2**

These were God’s appointed times that came directly from God. Having specific times when God’s people gather for worship is not an invention of men; it is a mandate from God. If you want to be spiritual, church is not optional.

**OBSERVATION #2** – There was to be a special day of worship one day a week. **23:3**

One day a week work there was to be a break from the normal routine of life and work and there was to be a restful focus and devotion upon spiritual matters. **According to Isaiah, it was to be a day in which one stopped focusing on his own agenda and pleasure and totally focused on honoring and delighting in the Lord (Is. 58:13-14).**

So many people go to church totally focused on themselves when they need to remember church is to focus our attention on God.

Now the phrase “sabbath of complete rest” is rare. It is found here and only in Ex. 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; Lev. 16:31; 25:4, 5. The emphasis of this combination which literally in Hebrew reads “Sabbath-Sabbathon” means to cease and desist from work and rest. What God is saying is there is to be one day a week when His people completely stop work and rest and focus their attention on Him. God has not designed a human to work seven days a week without a break. God has not designed people to spend their entire existence focused on themselves—He wants one day a week when the focus is totally on Him.

God has deemed something sacred about the number seven and Dr. Gleason Archer does a good job pointing out how important seven is: 1) Every seventh day is a holy Sabbath; 2) Every seventh year is a Sabbath year of rest; 3) After seven sevens of years, the 50<sup>th</sup> year is to be a holy year of jubilee in which all mortgaged lands are returned to the original families; 4) The Passover is held on the evening of the 14<sup>th</sup> (2x7); 5) The Feast of Unleavened Bread is held for the next seven days; 6) The Feast of Unleavened Bread is held after seven sevens of days following the save-sheaf offering—day 50; 7) The seventh month is set apart for three holy observances: Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles; 8) Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated seven days—15<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>.

**OBSERVATION #3** – There is to be a special day a year to celebrate the Lord’s Passover **23:5**

Jesus Christ is our Passover (I Cor. 5:7).

**OBSERVATION #4** – There is to be a special week of eating Unleavened Bread. **23:6-8**

This feast is closely connected to the previous Passover because it began the next day after the Passover was observed. Leaven is a symbol of evil and the eating of unleavened bread signified having fellowship with Christ. Here is the chronology—in order for one to have intimate fellowship with Christ one must first be covered by the blood.

Now notice **verse 7**; in order to have fellowship with Christ, there must be a day in which one does not do any laborious work, but really focuses attention on God and on His offerings. God’s people were to gather together and bring their offerings and for seven days focus their attention on Him.

Every day is a day to focus your attention on fellowship with Jesus Christ. There is no break in the action. If we are to be holy people, we must gather together one day a week and focus our attention on God. Fellowship with God is not based on our work but on Christ's work for us.