

Deuteronomy 16:1-17 The Three Annual Sabbatical Feasts of Israel

Introduction: By “sabbatical” I mean that these three feasts are directly related to the fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”. The law of the Sabbath day is directly connected to the law of the Sabbath year, the law of the year of Jubilee, the law of the first-born, and to the three annual feasts which required special Sabbaths in their celebrations.

I. The Passover V. 1-8

- A. The Passover was to be observed each year in the month Abib, V. 1.
  - 1. This is the month in which the Israelites were set free from Egypt.
  - 2. The word “Abib” means “green sprouting or budding” and refers to springtime.
  - 3. This month is also called “Nisan” and roughly corresponds to our April.
- B. The Passover lamb (or goat) was to be killed and eaten as the forefathers had done in Egypt prior to their deliverance. (It was to be in remembrance of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. It is a type of man’s deliverance from sin by the death of Christ, the Lamb of God.) V. 2
- C. Immediately after the day of the Passover, the Israelites were to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. V. 3-4
  - 1. Technically this was not a separate feast, but was a part of the Passover celebration.
  - 2. It was to commemorate the unleavened bread which the Israelites carried out of Egypt to sustain them until the time when God would provide for them by manna from heaven.
- D. In V. 5-8 some additional regulations were given.
  - 1. V. 5-6 – The Passover along with the unleavened bread was to be eaten only at the place where the Lord would choose to place His name by the presence of the tabernacle or temple. V. 5-6
  - 2. The Passover lamb was not to be boiled or stewed, but was to be roasted. V. 7a
  - 3. The people were to eat in small groups of one or more families and remain together throughout the night as the forefathers had done. V. 7b
- E. Then they were to eat unleavened bread for seven days. V. 3, 8 (The seventh day was to be a special Sabbath.)

II. The Feast of Weeks V. 9-12

- A. The next annual sabbatical feast was The Feast of Weeks. V.9a (It was to begin at the start of the grain harvest and last seven weeks. V. 9b)
- B. Seven weeks makes forty-nine days and the fiftieth day was to be included in the celebration. Leviticus 23:15-16 (For that reason it is sometimes called “Pentecost” which means fiftieth.)
  - 1. A free-will offering was to be brought from the grain harvest. V. 10
  - 2. Not just the men, but all of the people were to come including widows, orphans, slaves, and foreigners. V. 11
  - 3. Like the Passover, it was to be a celebration of Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage. V. 12

III. The Feast of Tabernacles V. 13-15

- A. The Feast of Tabernacles was to be a seven day feast which was to begin seven days after both the grain and grape harvest was over. V. 13
- B. It, too, was to be engaged by all of the people including family, slaves, widows, orphans, and foreigners. V. 14
- C. It was to take place only at the place which God had chosen for His name to be. V. 15a
- D. They were to dwell in booths or tents for seven days in memory of the wilderness journeys.

E. They were to bring an offering of the increase of the land (grain or grapes) or of the increase of the works of their hands, whatever it may be. V. 15b

IV. A summary V. 16-17

A. These were the three annual festivals which required all of the men of Israel to attend. V. 16

B. They were all to bring a free-will offering. V. 17

1. Free-will does not mean that they were free to choose whether or not to bring an offering.
2. Rather it means that they were free to choose the kind of offering and the amount they would bring. (It might be a meat offering, drink offering, peace offering, sin offering, trespass offering or thank offering.)
3. There were more than three annual feasts, but the others did not require all of the men to attend.

V. Some observations

A. Just as all of the Israelites had been under bondage to the Egyptians even so all mankind was under the bondage of sin.

B. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb was shed to provide their deliverance from the Egyptians, even so the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God was shed to provide salvation for lost sinners.

C. Each of these festivals pointed out the great blessings of God upon the people of Israel and serve as a reminder of God's rich blessings upon all who trust in Jesus for salvation.

D. As the Israelites were to rejoice in those festivals, so Christians are to rejoice in the Lord.

E. As those Israelites were to bring offerings to the Lord, even so Christians ought to gladly render their offering and their service to the Lord.