

LESSON - 11

FESTIVALS OF JEHOVAH

Reading : Lev.23

Memory verses : 2 Cor.2:14, Psa.118:15

Theme : To celebrate the victory and joy of life in Jesus Christ

Introduction: Is Christian life joyful or sorrowful? What is your personal opinion? Do the people whom you know praise God and rejoice in all circumstances of their life? Paul and Silas sang praises to God in the prison of Philippi (Acts 16:25). Paul asks the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord always when he writes to them from the prison of Rome (Phi4: 4). The voice of rejoicing and victory will be in the tabernacles of God's People. Festivals of Israel are shadows of this truth. As these are given to Israel by God Himself the festivals are called the Festivals of Jehovah.

REASONS FOR GIVING THE FESTIVALS TO ISRAEL

1. It was the will of God that people who were delivered from Egypt should enjoy not only peace and rest but also happiness and joy in their lives (Deut. 16:11,14,15). But their joy should be in the presence of God. Therefore, festivals were instituted by God to give them spiritual; happiness and sustain them in that happiness. New Testament believers also must rejoice in the Lord always (Phil.4:4; John 15:11).

2. It was the practice in Israel to hear the Word of God during the festival. People gathered together on the first day of the seventh month at the time of Nehemiah. Ezra stood up on a platform and read the law to the people from morning till noon. They rejoiced hearing the Law (Neh.8:1-12.) It is an experience of joy to read, hear and meditate on the Word of God.

3. Gathering of people from different places at one location during the festivals was providing opportunities to know each other

and enjoy loving fellowship. In those days when communications were difficult, festivals helped people to remain as a nation. Believers should endeavour to help each other and be in fellowship. Forget not to do good and to communicate (Heb.13:16).

4. Festivals served as a reminder to other nations about the strength of Israel and prevented attack on them. Enemies of the gospel will be afraid if believers stand together. The Lord wants His people to be perfect in unity (John 17:11,21,23).

5. Festivals were occasions for people to bring their tithes, offerings and voluntary donations to the Temple of God. New Testament believers are duty bound to give bountifully for Lord's work from their material blessings." He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly. God loves a cheerfulgiver" (2 Cor.9:6-7).

6. Festivals of Israel prevented them from observing festivals of the heathen: They were commanded to observe separation and holiness as God's special people. Believers must keep themselves separated from heathen festivals and find joy in the presence of God along with other believers.

7. Festivals contained great prophetic meanings. They foreshadowed Christ's death and resurrection. His second coming, the millennium etc. In the New Testament age, we have to experience the substance of the festivals. How foolish it will be if we still run after the shadow!

Hebrew months : Days were allotted for the celebration of the festivals. The month in which they were liberated from Egypt was the first month in their calendar. Let us learn the Hebrew months in their order before we study the festivals:

1. Abib (Nisan)		Esther 3:7; Exo, 13:4 March – April
2. Zif	1 King 6:1	April – May
3. Sivan	Esther 8:9	May – June
4. Thammuz	Ezek 8:14	June – July
5. Ab	Ezra 7:9	July – August
6. Elul	Neh 6:15	August – September
7. Ethanin (Tissri)	1King 8:2	September-October

8. Bul (Marchesvan)	1King 6:38	October-November
9. Chisleu	Zach. 7:1, Neh 1:1	November-December
10. Tebeth	Esther 2:16	December-January
11. Shebath	Zach 1:7	January – February
12. Adar	Esther 8:11	February-March

Seven festivals: God had given Israel seven festivals. All males in Israel were commanded to gather together in the presence of God on three seasons of the year and celebrate the festivals (Exo.23:14-17).

1. Passover	:	Month	1	Day	14
2. Unleavened bread	:	"	1	"	15-21
3. First fruits	:	"	1	"	16
<u>4. Pentecost (feast of weeks)</u>			3	"	6
5. Trumpets	:	"	7	"	1
<u>6. Atonement</u>	:	"	7	"	10
7. Tabernacles	:	"	7	"	15-22

The three festivals in the first month are referred to as Passover feast or the fest of the unleavened bread. As the fourth festival falls on the fiftieth day after the festival of the first fruits, it is known as the feast of Pentecost or the festival of the weeks. The three festivals falling in the seventh month are together known as the fest of the tabernacles

OTHER FESTIVALS OF ISRAEL

Two more festivals were added in Israelite calendar later on.

1. Feast of the dedication (John 10:22): Antiochus Ehiphanus, the Syrian king desecrated the Temple of Jerusalem by sacrificing a pig in it. Temple was reclaimed by the Maccabees and dedicated once again. To commemorate this event, Israel started to observe on the feast of dedication on the 25th day of the 8th month from B.C. 164. On that day Jewish homes would be illuminated and the heroic deeds of the Maccabees would be narrated to their children.

2. Festival of Purim (Esther 10:20-25): When Hamen, the minister of King Ahasuerus plotted to annihilate the Jewish race, they were saved miraculously by God's providence. Thus Purim was declared as days of joy and victory on 14th and 15th Adar (12th month).

This festival which was instituted in the 5th century BC is being celebrated as the Jewish national day. Purim means 'lot'. The day which was selected by Haman through casting lots to destroy Israel turned out to be their day of celebration.

All festivals of Israel were days of joy which teach us many spiritual truths. Praise God for the joy that we enjoy through Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. Explain the reasons why God instituted festivals for Israel.
2. Write down the months of Hebrew calendar in the correct order.
3. Name the seven festivals of Israel. How are they classified into three groups?
4. Is it right or wrong for the New Testament believers to celebrate festivals or special days like Israel?
5. How are the festivals of Israel different from the festivals of other nations?

LESSON - 12

PASSOVER FEAST

Reading : Exo. 12; Lev. 23:5; Deut. 16:1-8

Memory verses : 1Cor 5: 7-8

Theme : To live fellowship with God after being saved from condemnation and slavery of sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.

Introduction: Who was the leader whom God used to liberate Israel from slavery in Egypt? How many plagues were sent to the Egyptians? Which was the last plague? How were the Israelites to escape from the last plague? What was the name given to the lamb