

## Celebrating the Feast of Christ (Exodus 23:14-19)

Preached March 17, 2024, by Pastor Phil Layton ([www.gcb.church](http://www.gcb.church))

Growing up in the Philippines my family used to an annual journey on Christmas week.

- It was a time we all went up the mountain to Baguio and stayed thru the end of the year.
- We usually met up with other missionaries we didn't normally see, often had a big feast.
- Food we normally didn't eat we had that week and always a big New Years celebration.
- Easter week was another big time of feasting with friends, celebrating the resurrection.
- And in the summer all families in our mission did a pilgrimage of sorts, M.E. conference.
- It was also a full week; parents enriched by fellowship, us kids excited for fun together.
- Some of the families we didn't see till next M.E. since they lived all over the country.
  - o Philippines Baptist potlucks are awesome, seriously!

Today in our journey through the book of Exodus we come to an older bigger better version.

- In ch 23 of Exodus, our next text is about annual seasonal celebrations for OT Israel.
- This is the origin of pilgrimages and the biblical foundation for potlucks, seriously!
- Families would go up to Jerusalem, up the mount they called Zion to stay for a week.
- In Ex 23 God speaks to Israel from Mt. Sinai about their future pilgrimages to Mt. Zion.
- The 1st is in the spring around the time of our Easter spring-break; all took a week off
- They ate different bread that week and the last day went out with a bang with a big feast.
- Then early summer they all got together for another feast, then again end of the year.
- All men had to be there, wives and families joined if they could (1 Sam 1, Dt 16, Lk 2).
- Kids had so much fun together to and from, parents assumed with others (young Jesus).
- Think of Mary and Joseph living in Galilee, traveling with kids at least to this 1<sup>st</sup> feast.
  - o Thinking of Jesus will help us understand this text.

**23:14** *“Three times in the year you shall keep a feast to me. <sup>15</sup> You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed. <sup>16</sup> You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor. <sup>17</sup> Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD. <sup>18</sup> “You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened, or let the fat of my feast remain until the morning. <sup>19</sup> “The best of the firstfruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.*

That last line may confuse, so let's address that point before we get to the main point.

- You may not be tempted to cook that way, but there's evidence pagan Canaanites did.
- Scholars are not sure, but this context is sacrifice, worship and avoiding idolatry (v. 13).<sup>1</sup>
- The first part of v. 19 is about what to bring in God's house, don't bring in any paganism.
- This may mean don't let what gives life (mother's milk) be with death (baby goat boiled).
- If boiled alive as pagans do, it involves causing death by milk that should give a baby life
- Some see a pro-life principle here: what gives life (a mother) shouldn't cause death.
  - o Life in its mother is protected clearly in ch 21.

**It's even more pagan to sacrifice a young human in its mother's womb**

- It may not be clear if sacrificing kids or weird animal rituals were known yet by Israel.
- But the clear main point is God's people are to celebrate Him together in true worship.
- A feast in Israel wasn't just food, it was family fellowship rejoicing in God's faithfulness. We're not Jewish men who must travel to the temple mount 3x a year like OT Israel, PTL

- All new covenant believers going to church get to worship in the Lord's house weekly!
- In your Bible reading, feast laws you may skim thru or ignore or be bored by (be honest).
- If you find some of it dry or hard to see how it applies or fits together, you're not alone.
  - A long time ago there were 2 Jews walking from the unleavened bread feast in Jerusalem.
  - They couldn't put it all together, how OT texts applied to their life and their experience.
- A 3<sup>rd</sup> Jew came along and helped them see how the Law of Moses wrote about Messiah. Their eyes were opened and it says their hearts burned as He showed them Christ in the OT
- That's Lk 24, where starting with Moses, including Exodus, Jesus said it's all about Him.
  - I want to start where the risen Lord did, with Moses, and I pray our eyes will be opened.
    - o This isn't boring history, it's for burning hearts

If I could pick a theme song for this series, it's Show Us Christ (history is His story)

Every message in Exodus I get to Jesus before it ends, but today I begin with Jesus.

- My title is Celebrating the Feast of Christ because each feast I see connected to Christ.
  - You ask how do we know OT festivals or feast days point to Christ? I'm glad you asked!
  - Col 2:17 says feast days *'are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.'*
  - He's the reality behind Jewish feasts, they're part of the shadows of what comes in Him.
  - On the other side of the cross, Jews saw only a shadow, our side sees Jesus on the cross.
- Ex 23 is like shadows of cross-beams, the light of later scripture looks up and shows Jesus.
- The original context looks forward to Canaan, the broader context looks forward to Christ
  - Israel's OT religious festivals all point ahead to the NT coming of Immanuel.
  - So let's look at these 3 Jewish celebrations in the light of the Jewish Savior they picture.
  - This isn't just an OT survey class on feasts, let's survey the wondrous cross

In redemptive history these 3 feasts cover past – present – future

### #1. Feast of Unleavened Bread – the week after Passover (this looked to their past in Egypt)

The Jews use a lunar calendar (based on the moon), on our calendar this is March/April.

<sup>15</sup> *You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. As I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed [i.e., no sacrifice]...* <sup>18</sup> *"You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with anything leavened...*

- We don't offer blood sacrifices anymore, because Jesus is our once-for-all sacrifice.
  - We don't bring animal offerings, but we're to bring financial offerings to God's house.
- We're not to come empty-handed and we should sacrifice of our time, talent and treasure.
- v. 15 required effort and preparation, it wasn't easy, because deliverance in Egypt wasn't.

o GO BACK TO CH 12 TO SEE THE CONTEXT OF THE COMMAND

**12:17:** *"you shall observe the **Feast of Unleavened Bread**, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. <sup>18</sup> In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, **you shall eat unleavened bread** [flat bread matza] until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. <sup>19</sup> **For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses** ...*

Passover lamb killed first day (v. 6), then it kicked off the 7-day Feast of Unleavened Bread

This was for the day after the last plague killing Egypt's firstborns. <sup>33</sup> *The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead."* <sup>34</sup> *So the people took their **dough before it was leavened**, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders ...<sup>39</sup> And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for **it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait**, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves ... **13:6** Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a **feast to the LORD**. <sup>7</sup> Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days; no leavened bread shall be seen with you, and no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. <sup>8</sup> You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did*

for me when I came out of Egypt.'<sup>9</sup> And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out

- So as you held unleavened bread in your hand you remembered God's hand that saved.
- It was a visual memorial of what God did before their eyes, delivering them with haste.
- Unleavened bread went in your mouth and words of God were to come out to your kids.
- Leaven symbolized sin's influence like yeast rises, grows, spreads, permeates the bunch.
  - o Flee sin with haste, as Israel fled from their slave-master in Egypt.
  - o Jesus warned His disciples to beware the leaven of the Pharisees (esp. legalism).
  - o Sweep it out, keep sinful influences from your home

We need to strive to take in only what's unleavened, untainted, pure, cleanse our house and hearts

Is this festival for the church? In a sense, yes, not Christians eating matza per se, but 1 Cor 5:6: *a little leaven leavens the whole lump?*<sup>7</sup> *Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*<sup>8</sup> **Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

So, in a sense, we celebrate the festival, not its old literal ingredients, but what they symbolize.

- cleanse out the old life in you, and confront sin in others so it doesn't infect the church.
- Paul warns the church that tolerates evil will find evil permeates, little by little.
- It's not about eating crackers the week after Passover, it's about Christ our Passover.

Mk 14:12 *And on the first day of **Unleavened Bread**, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?"* [Jesus told the disciples how to find the upper room and as they feasted that night He washed their feet]...<sup>18</sup> *And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me...one who is **dipping bread** into the dish with me..."*<sup>22</sup> *And as they were eating, he **took bread**, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; **this is my body**."*

Jesus gave His body on the cross the next day as the unleavened, unblemished, sinless sacrifice

Jesus rose again as the bread of life during this same 7-day Feast, and calls all to take Him in.

We celebrate in communion #1. [The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the week after Passover.](#)

## [Now #2. The Feast of Harvest – 50 days after Sabbath of prior feast \(looks to the present\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> *You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field...* [unlike the prior feast that looked at what God did in the past, this looks to what He's doing in the present harvest season]

Ex 23 is just the introduction to this feast, but Lev 23 has the instructions for the feast, after unleavened bread: *When you come into the land that I give you and reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest ...You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath.*<sup>2</sup>

So 50 days after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread was this next Feast

Keep a finger here and look at Ex 34 where it has an alternate name and additional information.

34:22 *You shall observe the Feast of **Weeks**, the firstfruits of wheat harvest...*

- another name for the Feast of harvest: Weeks (7 weeks after the Sabbath of feast before).
- So at the first of the wheat harvest, all men had to leave their lands to travel to Jerusalem.
- It took faith at the prime time for farmers to trust God to bless their crop while they left.
- They also had to trust no one would take advantage with all the men gone.

**34:24** *For I will cast out nations before you and enlarge your borders; no one shall covet your land, when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year.*

- God promises to protect women or children left behind when men went up to Jerusalem.
- The principle is God honors those who honor Him in worship and who put Him first.

- Each Sabbath and start of harvest season farmers left their fields, trusting God to provide.
  - Israelites left their homes at the best time to harvest to bring God's house their best first.
- <sup>26</sup> *The best of the firstfruits* [i.e., 'the first of the firstfruits, choicest part'] *of your ground you shall bring to the house of the LORD your God*

Dt 26 explains they were to bring it and say '*I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O LORD, have given me.*' *And you shall set it down before the LORD your God and worship before the LORD your God. And you shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house...* [and say] *Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given*

- Instead of eating the first and best apples or garden tomatoes, they were to bring it to God
  - They had to offer all the first of their produce back to God, trusting Him for more harvest
  - Not wait to give him what's leftover, to set aside a portion to bring to the Lord's house.
  - In joyful worship for God's goodness and gifts, give trusting God will bless and provide.
- 2 Cor 9:7 *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for **God loves a cheerful giver**...*<sup>10</sup> *He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*<sup>11</sup> *You will be enriched in every way to be generous*

... **Same language is used for us giving to God first, sacrificially and joyfully**

The NT also applies this language to missions and evangelism, of fields ripe for harvest.

- In the Philippines my dad's church plant was called Harvest Baptist from this very idea.
- Jesus tells us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers, including us in this room.
- Ex 23:16 mentions '*first fruits of your labors of what you sow in the field.*'
- In 1 Cor 16 Paul describes his first converts in a city as 'first fruits'<sup>3</sup> (pray more to come).
- Jesus described evangelism as sowing seeds in a field
- And get this: the Greek name for this feast that later Jews called it by was *Pentecost*.
- 50 days after the Sabbath in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Spirit came at Pentecost.
- Many tongues and 3,000 souls were saved, the church was born on this feast day,
  - o first fruits of a bigger harvest, Jews, every nation, today we join the harvesters

But that's not all! There's even more! **#3. Feast of Ingathering (aka Booths) – future element**  
 Middle of v. 16: '*... You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you **gather in from the field** the fruit of your labor.*'<sup>17</sup> *Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord GOD.'*

The Evangelical Exegetical Commentary says end of v. 17 means 'Sovereign Master, Yahweh' ...the one that they should recognize as ruler over all of life. Israel did not just count time, but rather filled time with the recognition of Yahweh's great deeds—past present and future.'<sup>4</sup>

- The 3 feasts show the past (Christ's death), present (church age) and future (end of age).
- All will appear before the sovereign Master one day, after He gathers in all He will save.
- This was also called the Feast of Booths, temporary shelters in fields at end of harvest.

Later in Jerusalem, on the last day of this week-long feast the Jews poured out water. Jn 7 says <sup>2</sup> *the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand....*<sup>37</sup> *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.* <sup>38</sup> *Whoever believes in me...[He promises living water]*

Sounds like Isa 55: *Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters...why...labor for what does not satisfy? ... eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food... come to me...* He's saying it's free, and all you can eat!

- There's a feast in the Lord, a fullness in the Lord that satisfies the hungry thirsty heart.
- Come to feed your soul in His Word that is sweeter than drippings of honeycomb.
- Taste and see that the Lord is good, that's what earthly feasts point to.

Turn to Isa 25 and I want you to see that in the OT context itself, feasts pointed to The Feast.

- We don't have to jump to the NT, the OT itself promises a Feast in Messiah's kingdom.
- Feasts in Israel were previews of a greater one to come in the age to come

**Isa 25:6** *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.* <sup>7</sup> *And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.* <sup>8</sup> **He will swallow up death forever;** and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces...[Rev 21 quotes for Lord Jesus in the new earth]

**Context of Isa 24:21** *On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven, in heaven, and the kings of the earth, on the earth [sounds like Rev 19].* <sup>22</sup> *They will be gathered together as prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison [Rev 20], and after many days they will be punished.* <sup>23</sup> *Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.*

- King Jesus shall reign till all enemies are put under His feet, and the last enemy is death.
- The final eternal state has no death, tears, sorrow, suffering, mourning and pain!
- Jesus comes to judge kings and lock Satan's hosts in a pit for 'many days,' Isaiah says.
- I take that as the 1,000 years of Rev 20, then punishment at the Great White Throne.
- Then Rev 21 says there's no need for sun in the New Jerusalem with the glory of Christ.
- Zech 14 has the same scenes as Rev 19-20 and says they'll celebrate the Feast of Booths
- So the OT itself connects this 3<sup>rd</sup> final feast to the end times, it's in prophecy of future.
  - o Rev 19 talks about a marriage feast at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.

A hymn says: We will feast in the house of Zion, We will sing with our hearts restored  
"He has done great things," we will say together, We will feast and weep no more<sup>5</sup>

How the Feast of Booths relates to the Wedding Feast of the Bride and the Lamb, I'm not sure.

- Not everyone is sure the chronology, but we can be sure a great banquet feast is coming
- Isa 25 is The Feast all OT feasts point forward to and preview, appetizers of the kingdom
- As I swallow good food in a feast here, I'm to think of Christ swallowing death there!
- What an anticipation, Jesus wipes away tears and Jesus prepares a spread for eternal joy!

Mt 8:22 'many will come from east and west...at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom...'

- Isa 25:8 is also applied to what Jesus does with saints in heaven before the end, Rev 7:15.
- **What a glory to think of Pastor Dale now in glory, no death, pain, sorrow – celebrating with Jesus!**
- He longed for the Lord's return, and scripture likens it to ingathering at end of harvest.

Rev 14:14 'behold...seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head... reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.' <sup>16</sup> *So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.* <sup>17</sup> *Then another angel came...swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.'*

**Sounds like Ex 23, ingathering at the end of harvest time, then judgment**

Mt 3:12 *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.* [gathering in believers first, then burning judgment].

13:39 *The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth...[v. 49]...angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous...*

24:29 "after the tribulation of those days...they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> *And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other* [final harvest ingathering, gathering in the last elect]

22:2 *The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son,<sup>3</sup> and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come...[Jesus said they'll face outer darkness but in v. 10 God's] servants went out into the roads and **gathered** all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests...<sup>14</sup> For many are called [invited], but few are chosen.*

Lk 14:15 NIV *"Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."* [Jesus then told a parable of men making excuses why they won't come to feast, so he says] *bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'* " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' " "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.

He calls us His servants to go to the highways and byways, compel men to come. Will you?

This past Wednesday Detroit Pistons guard Jaden Ivey said to reporters in a postgame interview "I sow the seed and just continue to trust God...before we leave [end of the press conference] I just want to say that Jesus is the way, the truth, the life. And to anyone in the world that's hearing this message, the kingdom of Heaven is near, Jesus is coming back, and we all have to repent for our sins and we have to put our faith in Jesus. He will come back when you least expect it. It's time to wake up if you haven't put your faith in Jesus Christ"<sup>6</sup>

We need to be more bold. If you haven't, don't make excuses.

- Come to Christ today. Call on the Lord while He is near.

Tell Him you know you're a sinner but trust what He did on the cross for sin as your only hope.

- Fiery judgment is coming if you don't repent.
- But there's a feast coming if you receive Jesus as King.
- Come hungry and humbly to Him, He'll save and satisfy

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<sup>1</sup> John Currid argues this is "a polemic against a Canaanite ceremony connected with a fertility cult. In the Ugaritic Texts, we read about an idolatrous custom of boiling a kid in its mother's milk as part of a festival. One text, called The Birth of the Gods Fair and Beautiful, says, 'Cook a kid in milk, a lamb(?) in butter.' The Hebrews were not to celebrate fertility in the same way as the pagans." *A Study Commentary on Exodus: Exodus 19-40*, vol. 2, EP Study Commentary (Carlisle, PA: Evangelical Press, 2001), 122-123. Others have pointed out that it doesn't explicitly say 'it's *mother's* milk,' but at the least boiling a kid (young goat) in milk was part of the worship of gods, suggesting some may have used the mother's milk when they took the baby from it, otherwise why forbid this? <sup>2</sup> v. 11, 15.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 16:15 (NASB95) "you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry..."

<sup>4</sup> Eugene Carpenter, *Exodus 19-40*, p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> Keith and Kristyn Getty, lyrics by Sandra McCracken, "We Will Feast in the House of Zion."

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/nba-star-jaden-ivey-tells-fans-jesus-is-coming-back.html>