

Young at Heart video right after worship
Jesse announce God's Bounty needs, dismiss kids, short break

Understanding the Old Testament

Message #4: Encouragement

Thank you Bill and Jake for filling in.

Romans 15:4-6 (turn around and read together)

Today: **Encouragement**

- Romans 15 reminds us that the Old Testament is there for our ENCOURAGEMENT.

"Encouraging" scripture passages...

- Form a little group of 4 or 5 real quick
- Share a favorite passage of scripture from the OT or NT that encourages you.
 - Take a couple minutes...
 - Get a few answers

Most encouraging scriptures come from the Psalms, Proverbs, prophets, NT epistles...

- Surprisingly, nobody quoted from Leviticus!
- Why not???
- When you think of Leviticus, what is the first thing that comes to mind?
 - Law, tattoos, stoning people, a bunch of "don'ts"

While all of that may be true, I have a wonderful surprise for many of you:

- Turn to **Leviticus 23...**
- First one there, please stand and read aloud the first 2 verses.
- **The FEASTS!**

Today I bring you a great word of encouragement through teaching about the FEASTS!

Objective:

- My continued effort to remove fear, uncertainty, and "lack of knowledge" from your reasons why you don't read a majority of the OT.
- Leviticus is almost universally ignored by most Christians, yet it contains one of the most encouraging examples of God's faithfulness in the entire Bible!

Now, just so I can assess our congregation regarding the annual feasts God commanded Israel to enjoy, WITHOUT LOOKING at your cheat-sheet headings your translation gives you, **how many of you can name all the feasts in Leviticus 23?**

- Awesome. ___ of you can name them all
 - that means I get to teach something today.

- Because if you can't name them all, odds are you don't know much about them.
- Nor would you know why they are a great source of encouragement for Christians!

Fun facts about Leviticus:

- Leviticus was written over a period of just 30 days while Israel camped at Mt Sinai.
- The name comes from the clan of Levi – in large part because of the priestly laws (Levitical laws) it covers.
 - But also purity and ritual laws as well
- Arguably, EVERY law covered in Leviticus foreshadows the role of Christ the Savior, but let's not get ahead of ourselves...

Lev. 23 gives a brief description of all the Feasts of the Lord.

Here they are, in the order in which God commanded them to be observed:

- **Passover**
- **Unleavened Bread**
- **Firstfruits**
- **Pentecost (Weeks)**
- **Trumpets**
- **Day of Atonement**
- **Tabernacles (Booths)**

Brief synopsis of each Feast:

- **Passover:**
 - The Jewish calendar is much different than our Gregorian calendar
 - The first month in the Jewish calendar is called Nisan (or Aviv)
 - It typically falls right between mid-March and mid-April
 - The first Passover – we've been through already – the Exodus
 - After the 40 years of wandering, when Israel took the land of Canaan, they were to celebrate and remember that awesome day with an annual Passover on the 14th day of Nisan.
- **Unleavened Bread**
 - This feast started on the 15th day of Nisan – the day after Passover
 - Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are often linked as one feast over two days.
 - Leaven is often used as a symbol for sin
 - It causes the bread to rise, but to decay much faster than if it was baked without it.
 - Israel was commanded to go through their homes at the beginning of this feast and rid the entire house of yeast/leaven
 - Then the feast would last a total of seven days – beginning and ending with Sabbath days of rest.
- **Feast of Firstfruits**
 - This took place on the 16th day of Nisan – 2 full days after Passover

- Notice it happens on the 2nd day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
- Israel was commanded to bring their first cut of the barely harvest that was just ripening, and present it before the Lord in a Holy Assembly
- It signified life, and Israel's celebration of God's faithful providence
- **Pentecost (Weeks)**
 - 7 weeks later, Israel would observe a Sabbath day, then celebrate this Feast on the 50th day.
 - The Jews reason for celebrating this feast is due to the timing of the giving of the Law, specifically the Ten Commandments and Moses writing Leviticus while on Mt. Sinai, completing the work 50 days after Passover.
 - The celebration included each family baking two loaves of bread, with leaven.
 - To Jews today, the significance of the two loaves of bread symbolizes the two tablets of stone on which God Himself wrote the Ten Commandments.
 - Christians see Pentecost's two loaves as a commemoration of the two major covenants of Law and Grace.

These were the "Spring" Feasts

- Now, let's recognize a few things:
 - Jesus died on Passover.
 - He was in the grave on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - And He was raised to life on the Feast of Firstfruits.
 - Literally.
 - 40 days later, after 500 witnesses saw Him in His resurrected body, Jesus ascended into heaven right before the disciples' eyes.
 - 10 days later was Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came in tongues of fire upon the believers in the Upper Room, as they were preparing to celebrate the feast of Pentecost that very day.

God's feasts had two purposes:

- 1) For Israel to remember His faithfulness
- 2) As a foreshadowing of God's Son, the Savior, the Lamb of God, the Firstfruit of all Creation, sending the Holy Spirit at Pentecost thus ushering in the days of the harvest of souls in what we call "The Church Age" in which we now live.
- In His first coming to earth, Jesus fulfilled the first 4 Feasts.
 - More on that later...

Now, the Fall Feasts:

- **Feast of Trumpets**
 - A little more than 4 months after Pentecost was the Feast of Trumpets.
 - It took place on the 1st day of the 7th month – always with a New Moon
 - Jews today refer to this feast as Rosh Hashana (New Year)
 - However, God refers to Aviv/Nisan as the first month of the year:

- Exo 12:2 “This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.”
 - Referring to Tishri (the 7th month on the Jewish calendar) as the 1st month began in the 2nd century, 1500 years after Leviticus was written
 - Historical accounts are messy when it comes to the reasons why
 - The feast was indeed that – a feast involving an offering to the Lord on a day of rest
 - The sound of trumpets would officially mark the beginning of this feast.
 - **The Day of Atonement**
 - Yom Kippur
 - This “feast” started with a 24-hour fast, with a feast of celebration at dusk on the 10th day of the 7th month – 9 days after the Feast of Trumpets.
 - Two lambs were offered to the Lord, one was killed on the altar, the other was released and called the “scape goat”
 - It carried with it the sins of the nation of Israel into the wilderness – far away from the people, absolving them of their sins.
 - Jews today refer to the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement as “The High Holy Days”
 - They typically correspond with mid-September through mid-October
 - **The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths)**
 - This was the final feast of the year.
 - It lasted 7 days – Sabbath to Sabbath – when Israel would make huts (booths) to live in for the week, remembering the wandering of their ancestors and the faithfulness of God to bring them out of captivity and into the promised land.

Now, let’s put all this together in a 90-second video:

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WNO2WmnyBOY>

Come Lord Jesus!

How encouraging is it to know God not only foreshadowed Christ’s first coming, but He has also foreshadowed His SECOND coming??

Before Jesus comes again...

- A trumpet sound!
 - 1 Thessalonians 5 tells us the dead in Christ will rise, then all who believe will join them as we meet Jesus in the air!
 - This now referred to as the Rapture of believing souls – signifying the beginning of the end times.
 - For 7 years, the world will endure the Tribulation – a final harvesting of souls by God before Jesus returns.

- His Return will be the fulfilling of the Day of Atonement.
 - The separation of the sheep and the goats
 - Otherwise known as judgment day – where Christ will judge the world
- And the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) symbolizes the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth
 - with His people, free from the power of Satan and His demons.
- That Day is coming, church!

We don't know the day or the hour, but consider this:

- Jesus literally fulfilled the first 4 Feasts on the days they occurred on the Jewish calendar, about 1480 years after Leviticus was written.
- That does allow us to strongly consider that Jesus' 2nd coming may indeed happen on the literal day of the Feast of Trumpets.
- God can certainly do it another way, but after this study on the Feasts I've been doing over the past year or so, **I can tell you I will be looking to the skies a little closer on Rash Hashana than I ever have in years' past.**
 - In 2018, that's September 10!
 - Again – not even Christ knows that day until the Father tells Him, so don't go telling people I've predicted the day!

Let's wrap this up:

ENCOURAGEMENT (the feasts)

Understanding the OT...

- My objective in teaching this series is to free believers from fear and a lack of knowledge about reading the OT as one who lives under the New Covenant.
- And understanding the FEASTS greatly encourages us to see God's faithfulness, and have great confidence that He will indeed come again – as promised!

My challenge/Application:

- If it's been a while, consider taking part in a Passover meal at a nearby Messianic Church.
- I would recommend Beth Sar Shalom, but there are others.
- In the same breath, Christians are NOT commanded to observe the feasts.
 - Paul says in THREE of his 13 epistles not to judge one another as to whether or not we observe the feasts.
 - **Gal 4:10-11 You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.**
 - **Rom 14:5, One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.**
 - **Col 2:16-17, Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**

- I encourage you to attend one if you've never done so, **TO EXPERIENCE WHAT ISRAEL WAS INTENDED TO EXPERIENCE AS THEY AWAITED THEIR SAVIOR.**
 - But I do NOT encourage you to attend them annually, nor to try to convince others they should.

(next) So here's the bottom line:

- Read and be encouraged by God's Word in the Old Testament!
 - See His foreshadowing of our Savior in the Feasts.
 - Read more details about the feasts in Numbers 28-29
- Party a lot with other believers!
 - There's a lot of times God encourages gatherings around FOOD!
 - You have permission to eat and fellowship a lot!
- Rest more often than you do.
 - All 7 feasts command days of rest.
 - Why? So that the body is rested well for the gathering of the harvest.
 - There's so much spiritual application there, I could keep you'll till next week!
- But all in all, BE ENCOURAGED that Jesus is coming soon, and live accordingly!

PRAY