

# Passover, Pentecost and Booths

## Discovering the Wonders of Our God

What do the three great pilgrimage festivals of ancient Israel have to do with our Triune God? Plenty! Seeing their relevance even for us today, it's no wonder that the Lord commanded His believing people to "present" themselves before Him three times a year in Jerusalem. Two of these festivals have already been enacted for the Body of Christ as a whole. The third is soon to come to the world stage. What's more: we are all invited to experience our own individual re-enactment. These are feasts of divine Presence you don't want to miss.

**"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths."** Deuteronomy 16:16 ESV

## Multiple Required Pilgrimages

The obvious, divinely-dropped hint that we should be paying close attention to these three required pilgrimage festivals is that the two most important events which launched the Early Church took place on the exact dates that the first two festivals were being celebrated. Jesus' death and resurrection occurred during Passover; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit transpired on the Day of Pentecost.

The timing of this "coincidence" had the terrific advantage of making these two salvation events much more widely known than if they had occurred at any other time of the year. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims flooded into Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost from Israel and all corners of the ancient world—just as scripture commanded them. If the Father wanted to publicize the events of His Son's sacrifice and the giving of His Spirit, no better times could have been chosen. Could that have been the reason?



In reality, there exists an intrinsic connection between all three of the Jewish pilgrimage festivals—Passover, Pentecost and Booths—and their Messianic or Christian counterparts. The dates had been chosen long before Jesus came to earth; indeed, they were an important part of the Father's preparations for His Son's mission. From the Jewish perspective these three festivals had been commanded by God to commemorate special moments in their life with Him. From our perspective, those same Jewish events were prophetic signs pointing towards their true fulfillment that would come to us through Jesus Christ.

## The Purpose of Pilgrimage

Before we probe the layers of meanings that the first two events contain and search out the third festival towards which they point, let's pause to note the special character of these festivals:



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they necessitated a pilgrimage, they were required, the worshippers were to “appear before the Lord” and they were festivals held in Jerusalem. The Lord dwelt in the Temple at Jerusalem; His glory rested upon the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. Though only the high priest was allowed entrance into the holiest place, “all Israel” (all male Israelites) could gather in the court immediately in front of the Temple. This was their privilege and their high calling — to draw near their God through sacrifice.

Ancient Israelites were primarily farmers and herders. Like other agrarian people throughout history, they would rarely travel from their homes beyond a day’s journey in the course of their lifetime. Yet, these festivals required all males to make the journey three times a year, regardless of how many days that would have taken. Why? Certainly, it would have had the effect of bolstering their national identity and solidarity, but that is not the reason we are given. The men were to “appear before the Lord” — their God wanted to “see” them as personally presenting themselves to Him, despite whatever it cost of effort or expense. This meant moving beyond the comfortable and familiar environs of home, as they intentionally set out to draw near their God. The pilgrimage trained the Israelites to understand that their God expected them to seek Him.

The meaning of this is clear: The Lord desires to be intimately and personally known by His people and He expects us to go to the “trouble” of seeking His presence. Not only that, but these were not intended to be joyless duties. They were festivals. The Lord commanded His people to gather in celebration of their unique blessing of having Him for their God. Other holy days were expected to be solemn assemblies, requiring sacrifices for sin. Not these! These were feasts, as if the Lord were saying, “Take the day(s) off. Eat up! Enjoy!”

## Passover (*Pesach*)

Passover celebrates the deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian bondage. The angel of death “passed over” the households of the Israelites where the blood of a freshly slain lamb had been applied to the doorposts, as he carried out the Lord’s vengeance upon every first born of Egypt. This final divine intervention won them their freedom from slavery; indeed, they left Egypt carrying away spoils like victors after a battle. Later, when Passover was celebrated in Israel, an agricultural festival always followed it. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, lasting seven days, commemorated the first harvest of the year, the barley harvest.

Jesus is our Passover Lamb, sacrificed for us that death may pass us over. He is also our ongoing feast of unleavened Bread from heaven, the Living Word who declares life-giving truth to us.

## Pentecost (*Shavuoth*)

Pentecost takes its name from the 50 days by which it follows Passover. Its connection to Israel’s salvation history is unclear, though it eventually grew to commemorate the giving of the Law, due to speculation by the rabbis that the 50 days marked the time it took for Israel to journey from Egypt to Mount Sinai where the Law was given. Once in the Land, it celebrated the first great harvest of the new season, the wheat harvest, being also known as The Feast of the Harvest or First Fruits.



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That the Holy Spirit came down on Pentecost is a sign that the Law written on stone tablets at Sinai is now being written in our hearts by the life-giving Spirit. The out-pouring that day didn't give birth to the church as some suppose, but it did empower the "infant" church's first harvest. About three thousand souls were added through Peter's first sermon to those who already formed the new community of faith "birthed" by Jesus on the evening of His resurrection.

## Tabernacles (*Succoth*)

Tabernacles commemorates the 40 years Israel "tabernacled" with the Lord. Ironically, the wilderness period was a time of severe discipline for the generation that left Egypt with Moses but rebelled against entering the Promised Land. All of them died as punishment for their unbelief. However, for the younger generation it was a season of remembered closeness with their God, as Moses and the Lord prepared them for what would become their victorious entrance into the Land. Once Israel came into the Land, Tabernacles (also called Booths) became associated with the harvest festival, The Feast of Ingathering, which followed the summer growing season.

The church has continued to grow ever since it was planted in the world through Passover and Pentecost. Now, the time for the final harvest is rapidly approaching. Many signs already give incontrovertible evidence that the earth is being prepared for the last great event of salvation: the Second Coming of Jesus and the final harvest. When our Lord returns God will indeed "tabernacle" with His people and all the redeemed will rejoice in the great harvest festival at the end of the age. The heavenly Jerusalem will come down. Heaven and earth will be united at last. The Father will be dwelling once again in the midst of His people. May you and your loved ones be among us there! May you labor faithfully with the Lord to bring in many more!

## Multi-Layered Revelations

Just as Passover relates to Jesus and Pentecost to the Holy Spirit, so Tabernacles points us to Father God. Each one of the Festivals, however, also invites us to celebrate Jesus who is our sin-bearing Savior (the true Passover Lamb), our mighty Lord (anointing us with the power of His Spirit) and our Bridegroom (returning for the Marriage Feast). These layers of meaning, in turn, beckon us to embark on our own pilgrimages to know our Lord more intimately, even as God has restored them to the church.

### 1) Church "Restoration" Pilgrimages.

Seen from the long perspective of history, it seems as if the Father had to re-ignite the Church with a clearer focus on the grace that flows to us from the sacrifice of His Son. This was the great task of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: re-establishing the Lord's requirement that we be "born again" into a life-saving relationship with Jesus. The Reformers' message of "salvation by grace alone through faith alone by Christ alone" led to a harvest of conversions that is still going on today.

Then, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, early Pentecostalism recovered the power that the Church had lost through its historic neglect of what Jesus commanded His disciples to pray for and expect: the baptism in the Spirit. Signs and wonders were restored and are still sweeping through the harvest fields, especially in the Third World. Towards the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, unprecedented out-pourings of revival ushered in



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an emphasis on the Father's heart of love, restoring a focus on the unconditional love of the Father for His people. God will likely do more before His Son's return, but these church-wide restorations have been truly amazing.

## 2) Our Individual Pilgrimages.

Those who desire to know the Lord intimately have the journey outlined by these pilgrimage festivals. Passover commemorates the birth of saving faith in us through the life-giving revelation of our Risen Lord. Then, following the example of the first believers, we can pray to the Lord for a Pentecost of empowerment, seeking to be baptized by Him with power in the Holy Spirit.

These two experiences will bring anyone who desires it into an intimate relationship with both Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It doesn't have to end there! Press in to know the Father. Seek His will. Seek His heart. Seek His presence. It remains our Lord's delight to reveal His Father to us. Many have already discovered this to be gloriously true.

## More Divine Discoveries

**Our Father in Heaven** Someone has to be in charge and we couldn't hope for a more loving, joyful or completely competent Being to take the reins. God our Father has never failed to love or to govern wisely—it is impossible for Him to make a mistake or commit a moral failure in anyone's life. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit apparently defer to the Father's leadership to say nothing of the unnumbered hosts who serve Him night and day. Yet, Satan rebelled, as did the entire kingdom of darkness and they have seduced humanity into thinking that their Enemy is somehow our enemy...

**Jesus Our Savior** Jesus is the Hero of our story. In fact, all of history is His Story. Before the cross it tells us of humanity's fall and of God's ways of preparing us for the Savior to come. Then for a brief moment in time Jesus left His divine powers behind, took the plunge into earth's pain and darkness, and lived in our midst, becoming forever united to our humanity. At the cross He single-handedly redeemed us. After the cross and His ascension history reveals His slow, patient way of redeeming humanity through us. It is easy to miss it: easy to look at the world and not see a Creator; easy to look at our history and not see His Story. Seeing Him changes everything.

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## Scriptures on the Three Festivals

1) Passover: "Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place that the Lord will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. Deuteronomy 16:1-3 ESV

2) The Feast of Weeks: "You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 16:9-10 ESV

3) The Feast of Booths: "You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your feast... For seven days you shall keep the feast to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful." Deuteronomy 16:13-15 ESV

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For over a decade Steve Evans and [Healing Streams](#) have been helping people recover inner peace and freedom through the free eCourse for healing, [Matters of the Heart](#). Through Forerunners4Him he has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit-filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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