

A New Covenant reading of Leviticus 23

These notes support the sermon “The New Covenant & God’s Instructions.”

You can find it here: <http://www.melbsdb.com.au/sermon/the-new-covenant-and-gods-instructions>

Sabbaths

Hebrews describes the continuing applicability of experiencing the sabbath (*sabbath-ing*) — *sabbath-ing* does not distinguish between weekly and annual sabbaths.

“There remains a Sabbath rest [*Sabbatismos, Sabbath-ing*] for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9).

Sacrifices / Offerings

Yet Hebrews defines all sacrifices and offerings as being obsolete (“done away with”).

5 “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;

6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.

7 Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

8 When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the *first* [*sacrifices, offerings*] in order to establish the second [*God’s will*]. 10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:5–10).

Many say it’s really too hard to figure out what to do. But the appropriate operation is to retain *sabbath-ing* while eliminating the sacrifices and offerings (~~marked like this~~), which are fulfilled by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ.

Leviticus 23

Feasts of the Lord

1 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the Lord that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.

The Sabbath

3 “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwelling places.

The Passover

4 “These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them. 5 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight, is the Lord's Passover.

Unleavened Bread

6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. 8 ~~But you shall present a food offering to the Lord for seven days.~~ On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work.”

The Feast of Firstfruits

9 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ~~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, 11 and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, so that you may be accepted. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. 12 And on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb a year old without blemish as a burnt offering to the Lord. 13 And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the Lord with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin. 14 And you shall eat neither bread nor grain parched or fresh until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.~~

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

15 “You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. 16 You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. ~~Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord. 17 You shall bring from your dwelling places two loaves of bread to be waved, made of two tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as firstfruits to the Lord. 18 And you shall present with the bread seven lambs a year old without blemish, and one bull from the herd and two rams. They shall be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the Lord. 19 And you shall offer one male goat for a sin offering, and two male lambs a year old as a sacrifice of peace offerings. 20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. 21 And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.~~

22 “And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.”

The Feast of Trumpets

23 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 24 “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation. 25 You shall not do any ordinary work, ~~and you shall present a food-offering to the Lord.~~”

The Day of Atonement

26 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 27 “Now on the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. It shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves ~~and present a food-offering to the Lord.~~ 28 And you shall not do any work on that very day, for it is a Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. 29 For whoever is not afflicted on that very day shall be cut off from his people. 30 And whoever does any work on that very day, that person I will destroy from among his people. 31 You shall not do any work. It is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. 32 It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves. On the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.”

The Feast of Booths

33 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 34 “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. 35 On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. 36 For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation ~~and present a food-offering to the Lord.~~ It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.

37 “These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, ~~for presenting to the Lord food-offerings, burnt-offerings and grain-offerings, sacrifices and drink-offerings, each on its proper day,~~ 38 besides the Lord's Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord.

39 “On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the Lord seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. 40 And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. 41 You shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, 43 that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

44 Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the Lord.

Symbolically fulfilled

Further to the sacrifices and offerings, there are some practices that appear symbolic for a reality that is already present. These symbols found their fulfilment in Jesus Christ.

Some believe that we should still act out these symbols as they are educational. Others believe we should not act them out, as we have already received the reality in Jesus Christ. Outside of an explicit instruction, we should accept that this is a matter of interpretation, and that it should be subject to an individual's conscience, with all individuals acting according to their faith.

What follows is a brief explanation of the symbols embedded in the various feasts.

Passover

The purpose of the Passover was focused on community formation — to show that the Lord had spared the Israelites. This meaning and function has been superseded by the Lord's Supper — in which our Lord appropriated the symbols of Melchizedek (demonstrating a change in the law / priesthood) to indicate participation in His body.

“Now before the Feast of the Passover ... Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, do you wash my feet?” 7 Jesus answered him, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand.” 8 Peter said to him, “You shall never wash my feet.” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me.” 9 Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” 10 Jesus said to him, “The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean ...”

12 “When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, “Do you understand what I have done to you? 13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. 18 I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen” (John 13:1–18).

“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood’” (Luke 22:19–20).

Unleavened bread

This claim is substantiated by:

6 “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?
7 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. 8 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” (1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

i.e. Paul demonstrates that the keeping of this feast is to be performed through a transforming of the mind and circumcision of the heart.

Trumpets

Blast of trumpets denotes war. Christ has already gone to war and has returned victorious.

“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18).

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:8).

“But thanks be to God, the One always leading us in triumph in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Booths

Christ already tabernacled among us:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt [*tabernacled*] among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

And Christ tabernacles within us, individually and collectively:

“14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell [*tabernacle*] in your hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:14-17).

“You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:21).

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