

CHAPTER 7

THE FEASTS, NEW MOONS AND SABBATHS OF THE HEBREWS

Enumeration of the Hebrew festivals - The passover - The pentecost - The feast of tabernacles - The new moons - The first and second annual sabbaths - The third - The fourth - The fifth - The sixth and seventh - The sabbath of the land - The jubilee - None of these festivals in force until the Hebrews entered their own land - The contrast between the Sabbath of the Lord and the sabbaths of the Hebrews - Testimony of Isaiah - Of Hosea - Of Jeremiah - Final cessation of these festivals.

We have followed the Sabbath of the Lord through the books of Moses. A brief survey of the Jewish festivals is necessary to the complete view of the subject before us. Of these there were three feasts: the passover, the Pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles; each new moon, that is, the first day of each month throughout the year; then there were seven annual sabbaths, namely, 1. The first day of unleavened bread. 2. The seventh day of that feast. 3. The day of Pentecost. 4. The first day of the seventh month. 5. The tenth day of that month. 6. The fifteenth day of that month. 7. The twenty-second day of the same. In addition to all these, every seventh year was to be the sabbath of the land, and every fiftieth year the year of jubilee.

The passover takes its name from the fact that the angel of the Lord passed over the houses of the Hebrews on that eventful night when the firstborn in every Egyptian family was slain. This feast was ordained in commemoration of the deliverance of that people from Egyptian bondage. It began with the slaying of the paschal lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month, and extended through a period of seven days, in which nothing but unleavened bread was to be eaten. Its great antitype was reached when Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.[1](#)

The Pentecost was the second of the Jewish feasts, and occupied but a single day. It was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the first-fruits of barley harvest had been waved before the Lord. At the time of this feast the first-fruits of wheat harvest were offered unto God. The antitype of this festival was reached on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ, when the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost took place.[2](#)

The feast of tabernacles was the last of the Jewish feast. It was celebrated in the seventh month when they had gathered in the fruit of the land, and extended from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of that month. It was ordained as a festival of rejoicing before the Lord; and during this period the children of Israel dwelt in booths in commemoration of their dwelling thus during their sojourn in the wilderness. It probably typifies the great rejoicing after the final gathering of all the people of God into his kingdom.[3](#)

In connection with these feast it was ordained that each new moon, that is, the first day of every month, should be observed with certain specified offerings, and with tokens of rejoicing.[4](#) The annual sabbaths of the Hebrews have been already enumerated. The first two of these sabbaths were the first and seventh days of the feast of unleavened bread, that is, the fifteenth and twenty-first days of the first month. they were thus ordained by God:

"Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses. . . . And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which

every man must eat, that only may be done of you."[5](#)

The third in order of the annual sabbaths was the day of Pentecost. This festival was ordained as a rest-day in the following language:

"And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein; it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations."[6](#)

The first day of the seventh month was the fourth annual sabbath of the Hebrews. It was thus ordained:

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein; but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord."[7](#)

The great day of atonement was the fifth of these sabbaths. Thus spake the Lord unto Moses:

"Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be an holy convocation unto you. . . . Ye shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath."[8](#)

The sixth and seventh of these annual sabbaths were the fifteenth and twenty-second days of the seventh month, that is, the first day of the feast of tabernacles, and the day after its conclusion. Thus were they enjoined by God:

"Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days; on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be sabbath."[9](#)

Besides all these, every seventh year was a sabbath of rest unto the land. The people might labor as usual in other business, but they were forbidden to till the land, that the land itself might rest.[10](#) After seven of these sabbaths, the following or fiftieth year was to be the year of jubilee, in which every man was to be restored unto his inheritance.[11](#) There is no evidence that the jubilee was ever observed, and it is certain that the sabbatical year was almost entirely disregarded.[12](#)

Such were the feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, of the Hebrews. A few words will suffice to point out the broad distinction between them and the Sabbath of the Lord. The first of the three feasts was ordained in memory of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and was to be observed when they should enter their own land.[13](#) The second feast, as we have seen, could not be observed until after the settlement of the Hebrews in Canaan; for it was to be celebrated when the first fruits of wheat harvest should be offered before the Lord. The third feast was ordained in memory of their sojourn in the wilderness, and was to be celebrated by them each year after the ingathering of the entire harvest. Of course this feast, like the others, could not be observed until the settlement of the people in their own land. The new moons, as has been already seen, were not ordained until after these feasts had been instituted. The annual sabbaths were part and parcel of these feasts, and could have no existence until after the feasts to which they belonged had been instituted. Thus the first and second of these sabbaths were the first and seventh days of the paschal feast. The third annual sabbath was identical with the feast of Pentecost. The fourth of these sabbaths was the same as the new moon in the seventh month. The fifth one was the great day of

atonement. The sixth and the seventh of these annual sabbaths were the fifteenth and twenty-second days of the seventh month, that is, the first day of the feast of tabernacles, and the next day after the close of that feast. As these feasts were not to be observed until the Hebrews should possess their own land, the annual sabbaths could have no existence until that time. And so of the sabbaths of the land. These could have no existence until after the Hebrews should possess and cultivate their own land; after six years of cultivation, the land should rest the seventh year, and remain untilled. After seven of these sabbaths of the land came the year of jubilee.

The contrast between the Sabbath of the Lord and these sabbaths of the Hebrews¹⁴ is strongly marked.

1. The Sabbath of the Lord was instituted at the close of the first week of time; while these were ordained in connection with the Jewish feasts.
2. The one was blessed and hallowed by God, because that he had rested upon it from the work of creation; the others have no such claim to our regard.
3. When the children of Israel came into the wilderness, the Sabbath of the Lord was an existing institution, obligatory upon them; but the annual sabbaths then came into existence. It is easy to point to the very act of God, while leading that people, that gave existence to these sabbaths; while every reference to the Sabbath of the Lord shows that it had been ordained before God chose that people.
4. The children of Israel were excluded from the promised land for violating the Sabbath of the Lord in the wilderness; but the annual sabbaths were not to be observed until they should enter that land. This contrast would be strange indeed were it true that the Sabbath of the Lord was not instituted until the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin; for it is certain that two of the annual sabbaths were instituted before they left the land of Egypt.¹⁵
5. The Sabbath of the Lord was made for man; but the annual sabbaths were designed only for residents in the land of Palestine.
6. The one was weekly, a memorial of the Creator's rest; the others were annual, connected with the memorials of the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt.
7. The one is termed "the Sabbath of the Lord," "my Sabbaths," "my holy day," and the like; while the others are designated as "your sabbaths," "her sabbaths," and similar expressions.¹⁶
8. The one was proclaimed by God as one of the ten commandments, and was written with his finger in the midst of the moral law upon the tables of stone, and was deposited in the ark beneath the mercy-seat; the others did not pertain to the moral law, but were embodied in that hand-writing of ordinances that was a shadow of good things to come.
9. The distinction between these festivals and the Sabbaths of the Lord was carefully marked by God when he ordained the festivals and their associated sabbaths. Thus he said:

"These are the feast of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, BESIDE the Sabbaths of the Lord."¹⁷

The annual sabbaths are presented by Isaiah in a very different light from that in which he presents the Sabbath of the Lord. Of the one he says:

"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them."[18](#)

In striking contrast with this, the same prophet speaks of the Lord's Sabbath;

"Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."[19](#)

Hosea carefully designates the annual sabbaths in the following prediction:

"I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new moons, and HER sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts."[20](#)

This prediction was uttered about B.C. 785. It was fulfilled in part about two hundred years after this, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Of this event, Jeremiah, about B.C. 588, speaks as follows:

"Her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at HER sabbaths. . . . The Lord was as an enemy; he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces; he hath destroyed his strongholds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly; the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast."[21](#)

The feasts of the Lord were to be holden in the place which the Lord should choose, namely, Jerusalem;[22](#) and when that city, the place of their solemn assemblies, was destroyed and the people themselves carried into captivity, the complete cessation of their feasts, and, as a consequence, of the annual sabbaths, which were specified days in those feasts, must occur. The adversaries mocked at her sabbaths, by making a "noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of a solemn feast." But the observance of the Lord's Sabbath did not cease with the dispersion of the Hebrews from their own land; for it was not a local institution, like the annual sabbaths. Its violation was one chief cause of the Babylonish captivity;[23](#) and their final restoration to their own land was made conditional upon their observing it in their dispersion.[24](#) The feasts, new moons, and annual sabbaths, were restored when the Hebrews returned from captivity, and with some interruptions, were kept up until the final

destruction of their city and nation by the Romans. But ere the providence of God thus struck out of existence these Jewish festivals, the whole typical system was abolished, having reached the commencement of its antitype, when our Lord Jesus Christ expired upon the cross. The handwriting of ordinances being thus abolished, no one is to be judged respecting its meats, or drinks, or holy days, or new moons, or sabbaths, "which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." But the Sabbath of the Lord did not form a part of this handwriting of ordinances; for it was instituted before sin had entered the world, and consequently before there was any shadow of redemption; it was written by the finger of God, not in the midst of types and shadows, but in the bosom of the moral law; and the day following that on which the typical sabbaths were nailed to the cross, the Sabbath commandment of the moral law is expressly recognized. Moreover, when the Jewish festivals were utterly extinguished with the final destruction of Jerusalem, even then was the Sabbath of the Lord brought to the minds of his people.²⁵ Thus have we traced the annual sabbaths until their final cessation, as predicted by Hosea. It remains that we trace the Sabbath of the Lord until we reach the endless ages of the new earth, when we shall find the whole multitude of the redeemed assembling before God for worship on each successive Sabbath.

1 Ex.12; 1Cor.5:7,8. <[Return](#)>

2 Lev.23:10-21; Num.28:26-31; Deut.16:9-12; Acts 2:1-18. <[Return](#)>

3 Lev.23:34-43; Deut.16:13-15; Neh.8; Rev.7:9-14. <[Return](#)>

4 Num.10:10; 28:11-15; 1Sam.20:5,24,27; Ps.81:8. <[Return](#)>

5 Ex.12:15,16; Lev.23:7,8; Num.28:17,18,25. <[Return](#)>

6 Lev.23:21; Num.28:26. <[Return](#)>

7 Lev.23:24,25; Num.29:1-6. <[Return](#)>

8 Lev.23:27-32; 16:29-31; Num.29:7. <[Return](#)>

9 Lev.23:39. <[Return](#)>

10 Ex.23:10,11; Lev.25:2-7. <[Return](#)>

11 Lev.25:8-54. <[Return](#)>

12 Lev.26:34,35,43; 2Chron.36:21. <[Return](#)>

13 Ex.12:25. <[Return](#)>

14 On this point Mr. Miller uses the following language: "Only one kind of Sabbath was given to Adam, and one only remains for us. See Hosea 2:11. 'I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.' All the Jewish sabbaths did cease when Christ nailed them to his cross. Col.2:14-17. These were properly called Jewish sabbaths. Hosea says, 'her sabbaths.' But the Sabbath of which we are speaking, God calls 'my Sabbath.' Here is a clear distinction between the creation Sabbath and the ceremonial. The one is perpetual; the others were merely shadows of good things to come." - Life and Views,

pp. 161, 162. <[Return](#)>

15 Ex.12:16. <[Return](#)>

16 Ex.20:10; 31:13; Isa.58:13; compared with Lev.23:24,32,39; Lam.1:7; Hosea 2:11. <[Return](#)>

17 Lev.23:37,38. <[Return](#)>

18 Isa.1:13,14. <[Return](#)>

19 Isa.56:1-7; 58:13,14. <[Return](#)>

20 Hosea 2:11. <[Return](#)>

21 Lam.1:7; 2:5-7. <[Return](#)>

22 Deut.16:16; 2Chron.7:12; Ps.122. <[Return](#)>

23 Jer.17:19-27; Neh.13:15-18. <[Return](#)>

24 Isa.56. See the eighth chapter of this work. <[Return](#)>

25 See Chapter 10 <[Return](#)>

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