

# The LORD's Appointed Times

## Thought for the Week:

The appointed times can be called a cycle because they recur in a cyclical fashion, creating patterns and rhythms in time. The Sabbath creates a weekly cycle. The festivals occur annually. Each appointed time teaches unique lessons about Messiah, salvation, redemption, sanctification and our relationship with God. Each time we keep one of God's appointed times, it is an opportunity to spiritually elevate ourselves, drawing ever closer to God.

## Commentary:

Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The LORD's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations--My appointed times are these." (Leviticus 23:2)

The Bible refers to the Tabernacle as the *Ohel Moed* (אהל מועד), a term that our English Bibles translate as "Tent of Meeting." The word *moed* can refer to an appointed time or place. The Tabernacle was God's appointed place to meet with man at His appointed times. Leviticus 23 presents a list of God's appointed times (*moadim*, מועדים). They are the holy days which He appointed to meet with His people Israel.

This can be understood in a parable. The Master tells the story of how a certain king was giving a wedding feast for his son. He sent out his servants to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast. The servants had two critical pieces of information. They were to declare the appointed time and the appointed place of the banquet. As God summoned Israel to appear before Him, He decreed an appointed place and appointed times. The appointed place was the Tabernacle (and in later years, the Temple in Jerusalem.) The appointed times are the biblical festivals.

Since the destruction of the Temple, the appointed place has been removed, but the appointed times continue. God explains that the appointed times are to be "a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places" (Leviticus 23:14). That means that they are never to be cancelled. They are never obsolete or done away with. They are to be celebrated and observed wherever we live.

The appointed times are part of the biblical calendar. The biblical calendar is a lunar calendar. It is based on the phases of the moon. The waxing and waning of the moon determines the day of the biblical month. The tiny sliver of the new moon always appears on the first day of the month; the full moon indicates the middle of the month; the disappearance of the moon indicates the end of the month.

In Leviticus 23 God declares certain days on the biblical calendar to be *moadim*, that is, "appointed times." They include the weekly Sabbath, the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths.

It is not uncommon to hear people refer to the appointed times as the Jewish festivals. This is true in that God gave His appointed times to the people of Israel. He told the Israelites, "The LORD's appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations--My appointed times are these" (Leviticus 23:2). The Jewish people are the wardens of God's calendar. Therefore, many Christians and Jews think of the biblical Sabbath and festivals as the sole purview of the Jewish people. According to this line of thought, Gentile believers are not welcome to celebrate the appointed times.

However, God does not refer to them as Jewish festivals. He refers to them as "my appointed times." They are God's holy days. Paul asks, "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also" (Romans 3:29). The Bible never offered Gentile Christians any alternative festival days. To say that Gentile believers are not expected to keep God's appointed times is the same thing as saying that Gentile believers are not supposed to have any holy days or days of worship. Neither the Gospels nor the Epistles grant the Gentile believers their own special festivals.

In the days of the Apostles, both Jewish and Gentile believers observed God's appointed times together. They met in the synagogues and in the Temple on the Sabbath and festival days to celebrate and observe God's holy days. When Gentile Christianity left the cradle of Judaism, the Gentile Christians began to neglect the appointed times. The Sabbath day was replaced with Sunday observance. The timing of Passover was changed. The other festivals fell into disuse. Is this what God intended for believers?

It is true that the Apostles never commanded the Gentile believers to keep the appointed times, but neither did they tell them not to. They were silent on the matter. In those days, the idea of not keeping the appointed times simply had not occurred to anyone.