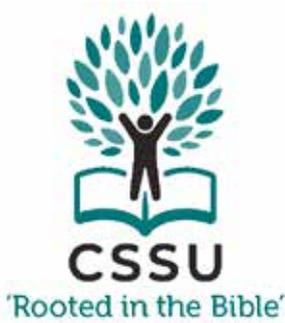


The Word



JULY 2025



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A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE RESOURCES

In order to be relevant and accessible to all readers, we sometimes recommend resources from websites. We choose these resources carefully, but cannot check or endorse all the content of a website – particularly future content, which is impossible to predict. Always remember to check internet opinions against Bible principles, and talk to someone at your Sunday School or church about any concerns that arise.

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The Word, July 2025



Editor: Becky Lewis



Designer: Julia Snobelen

The Word: Fantastic Feasts

Israel's escape from Egypt was a hugely significant moment in their story. Overnight, a new free nation was formed, made up of Israelites and non-Israelites (Exodus 12:38). A big shift in mindset had to happen because:

- For generations, they had all been surrounded by Egyptian culture. Egyptians believed in many gods, and that magic, idols and rituals protected you from evil. Something practical was needed to replace these superstitions, to teach about the one, true God, and how He could be relied upon for survival.
- They needed to unite together, with a unique culture that would mark them out as different from other nations, as ambassadors of God.
- They would find it difficult to adjust to their new-found freedom. Nearly all of them had been slaves in Egypt, with each day controlled and structured by their masters.

So God provided the young nation with a regular rhythm of celebration and reflection - a calendar of religious festivals, embedded into their farming year. These festivals (called 'feasts' in old English) were designed to teach the Israelites about their God, and about how to develop a relationship with Him.

But, the New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ was greater than all of this. The Law, including the whole religious calendar, had now served its purpose and was no longer necessary (Galatians 3:23-29). So, you might ask, what is the point of learning about these festivals at all, if Christians don't need to keep them? Read on to find out!

With love,

Becky Lewis

Remember!

Past issues of 'The Word' are at [**the-word.uk**](http://the-word.uk)

Embodied Learning

Have you heard of embodied learning? It's a way of learning that involves your whole body and all of your senses, rather than just sitting and listening to a teacher. It might include our emotions too, and experiences with the environment around us. The religious feasts in the Bible are great examples of embodied learning:

The Law of Moses used the senses as memory anchors. E.g.,

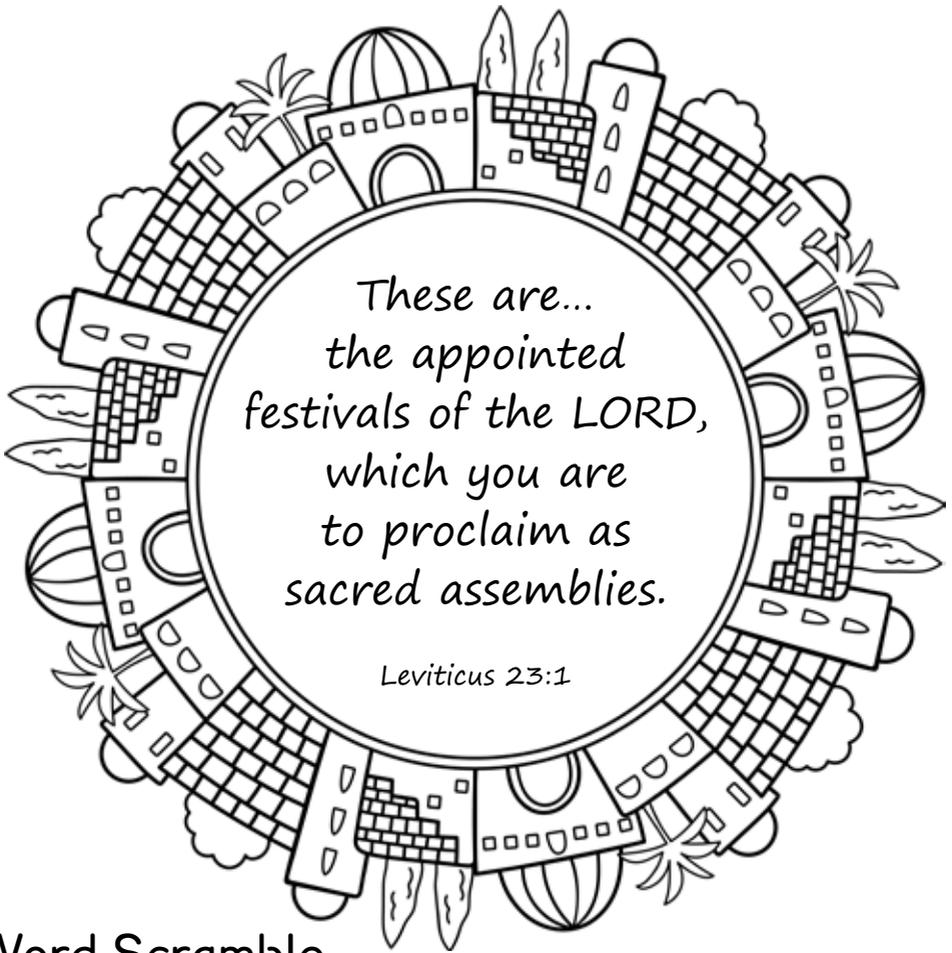
- Taste: the bitter herbs at Passover
- Touch: resting hand on the head of an animal sacrifice
- Smell: offerings on the Altar of Incense
- Sound: the trumpet blasts in the Feast of Trumpets
- Sight: the tassels on garments

Credit to Shawn Moynihan, 'Studies in the Lord's Supper', page 146.

Yet all of these deep experiences were designed to be a shadow of something better to come. They were leading up to something greater – a more perfect representation of the God of Israel and all that He stands for. The Law could only lead people so far. What the world needed to experience most of all was Jesus Christ.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.” 1 John 1:1





Word Scramble

Unscramble these festivals described in Leviticus 23. If you get stuck, take a peek at the next page...

DUNENEVAL BEARD	
BERTCANSEAL	
TRIRUSTFIFS	
KEWES	
TESTMURP	
SAPROVES	

Jewish Festivals and Holy Days

NAME	TIME OF YEAR	REFERENCE
IN THE LAW OF MOSES:		
Sabbath	Every 7 th day	Exodus 20:8-11
Passover	Nisan (Spring)	Exodus 12
Unleavened bread	Nisan	Leviticus 23:6-8
Firstfruits	Nisan	Leviticus 23:9-14
Weeks	Sivan (Late Spring)	Leviticus 23:15-22
Trumpets	Tishrei (Autumn)	Leviticus 23:23-25
Day of Atonement	Tishrei	Leviticus 23:26-32
Tabernacles	Tishrei	Leviticus 23:33-43
Sabbatical Year	Every 7 th year	Leviticus 25:1-7
Jubilee	Every 50 th year	Leviticus 25:8-17
ADDED LATER:		
Hanukkah	Kislev (Winter)	John 10:22
Purim	Adar (Late Winter)	Esther 9:27-28

WHAT HAPPENS

WHAT IT TEACHES

No work takes place. Rest allows time for God with family.

Setting aside time for God, trusting that He will provide.

Families eat a special meal, and tell each other about the first Passover.

Remembering that God rescued His people from Egypt.

Just after Passover: 1 week of eating bread without yeast.

To leave sin behind and obey God quickly.

Offering the first part of harvest to God.

To thank God for providing food.

A joyful time, celebrated 50 days after firstfruits. Grain offerings.

To thank God for harvest and for His laws.

Day of rest with trumpet blasts.

Reminding people to prepare their hearts for God.

Repenting for sins and restoring relationship with God.

Taking responsibility for actions and seeking forgiveness.

Live in tents or huts to remember the wilderness journey,

Remembering God's protection and to trust in Him.

The land rests. Debts forgiven.

Trust that God will provide.

Land and homes returned. Slaves freed. Community reset.

Importance of fairness, equality and fresh starts.

Commemorates rededication of Temple after it was lost. Candles lit.

Celebrates courage, faith and miracles.

Celebrates the saving of the Jews by Esther. Gift-giving and feasting.

Honoring God's hidden help and standing up for what's right.



Difficult questions: Animal sacrifices

Why were animals sacrificed as part of the festivals? Wasn't this cruel and unnecessary?

We know from various parts of the Bible that God cares deeply for animals. The book of Jonah finishes with God saying, "Should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand... and also many animals?"

Several Psalms describe how God provides food and shelter for the animal kingdom (e.g., Psalm 104 and Psalm 147:9). Jesus said that even a small bird doesn't fall to the ground without God noticing (Luke 12:6).

So, it isn't surprising that God expects us to care for animals too, to treat them well and not let them suffer. Proverbs 12:10 states that "the righteous care for the needs of their animals".

In the Law of Moses itself, working animals were protected from poor treatment. For example:

- Animals were given a rest every Sabbath (Exodus 20:10).
- If you saw an animal struggling under a heavy load, you had to help it, even if it belonged to your enemy (Exodus 23:5).

- You could not muzzle an ox while it was grinding grain for you (Deuteronomy 25:4). This was so that it could not be teased by the food while working.
- You could not yoke together different animals (Deuteronomy 22:10). This was because they would be unequal in size and strength, and this could hurt or stress the animals.

To have formal laws protecting animal welfare was very unusual, even up until recent times. Historian Cecil Roth stated that “until the nineteenth century, cruelty to animals was nowhere illegal, except in Jewish law” (‘The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation’, 1938).

But if God cares so much for animals, why include sacrifices at all? Well, part of it was to show that worshipping God was important – that sins had weighty consequences, and that it was right to give the best of what you had to God as an act of trust and gratitude. Sacrifice is meant to cost something that you care about.

It’s also worth remembering that animal sacrifices were a normal part of many cultures of the time, although they were usually carried out in a less controlled way. Some nations, including the nearby Canaanites, were even known to pass their own children through fire as an offering (2 Kings 17:16-17).

By contrast, Jewish sacrifices followed these important rules:

- The animals had to be healthy and treated well before being offered (Leviticus 22:21).
- The person bringing the offering had to connect with the animal by laying a hand on its head, showing respect and value for its life (Leviticus 4:29-30).
- The meat from the animal was not wasted. Usually:
 - The fat was burned as an offering to God (Leviticus 3:16).
 - Some meat was eaten by the priests (Leviticus 6:26).
 - Some was shared in a meal eaten by the offerer and their family (Deuteronomy 12:7).

God's radical inclusivity

In Bible times, it was highly unusual to treat the poor and the powerless with respect. The Law of Moses was quite different - designed to encourage compassion, fairness and inclusivity between Israelites. Here are some examples:

Feasts involved shared offerings, and people were told to **provide for the poor and strangers.**

Leviticus 23:22

For personal offerings, poorer people could bring **less costly sacrifices.**

Leviticus 5:7-11

Read Luke 2:24.

Who brings one of the cheaper sacrifice options to the temple?

Read Deuteronomy 15:1-2.

What had to be cancelled every 7 years?

Read Exodus 20:8-11.

Who was given the day off work every Sabbath?

Read Deuteronomy 16:14.

Who could join in with the Feast of Tabernacles?

People with financial difficulties who had to become servants were **released** at the Jubilee.

Leviticus 25:39-42

Read Leviticus 25:25-28

What had to be returned to the original family every 50 years?

How do you think this impacted the way people viewed it?

The two necessary Christian rituals: Baptism and Communion

Instead of all the Law of Moses, with its calendar of festivals, Christians are only required to keep two simple rituals – baptism and communion (sharing bread and wine).

Both rituals:

- point back to the triumph of Jesus' death and resurrection
- remind believers of their position today as forgiven members of God's family
- look forward to the hope of resurrection.



Photos taken at the baptism of Anna Yearsley, Christchurch West, New Zealand, April 2025.

The simplicity of these two rituals enabled them to spread to many different cultures, all around the world.

Although only two rituals are fixed, this does not mean that this is all that believers need to do – quite the opposite! Freedom from the Law means freedom to do more in our lives for God (Galatians 5:13-14).

Read Acts 2:42-47 to see how the early Christians lived.



Difficult questions: Holy days and rituals

Keeping the Sabbath is one of the 10 Commandments. Should Christians still keep the Sabbath?

Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, there was no longer any need to follow the Law of Moses. Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law – the Law had been pointing forwards to him (Colossians 2:17). In fact, the Christian way of life aims to fulfil the 10 Commandments in a different, deeper way.

But many Jewish believers struggled to accept this huge change. They continued to keep the Law, and they also tried to make Gentile converts keep it too. This caused such problems that a special meeting had to be called in Jerusalem. After a great deal of debate, the apostles and elders made the decision that believers were free from following the Law, apart from in a few matters:

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.” Acts 15:28-29

As we can see, keeping the Sabbath was not in this list. However, it is evident from Paul’s letters that some Christians still chose to keep the Sabbath, as well as other religious festivals:

“One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike.” Romans 14:5

So were they wrong to do this? Read on!

“So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.”
Galatians 3:24-25

The word ‘guardian’ here refers to the role of a particular Roman servant. It was his job to get the boys of a wealthy household safely to their teacher. Paul is saying that we no longer need the Law, as we have Jesus to follow.

(Richard N Longenecker, ‘Word Biblical Commentary on Galatians’, 1990)

Should we celebrate special events, and develop rituals and routines that can help us in our spiritual life?

Many believers down through the ages have adopted spiritual practices – for example, praying three times a day, following a daily Bible reading plan, or using fasting and meditation to focus the mind. Having a regular rhythm of pauses in our day (and special events throughout the year) helps us have a better perspective on life, and it is generally good for our mental and spiritual health.

However, passages such as Colossians 2, Romans 14 and the whole letter to the Galatians teach us we need to be very careful. Having personal spiritual rituals can be helpful, as long as we don't fall into some easy traps. It is human nature to value actions above attitude. The boxes below are examples of underlying problems which Jesus and the apostles took very seriously. It's important to remember:

- Salvation is a free gift from God that cannot be earned. Romans 6:23
- Some people find habits like these useful while others find them a heavy burden. It is very wrong to impose our own traditions on others, or allow them to divide the church. Luke 11:46, Romans 14:13, Galatians 2:14, Colossians 2:8



LESSONS FROM THE SABBATH

Our time belongs to God

Extract from Peter Watkins, 'The Sabbath' (CBM),
available for 60p from thechristadelphian.com.

The Lord's teaching goes deeper than the Ten Commandments. He invites us to look at the principles underlying the commandments, and to fulfil these principles in a positive way in our lives. [See Matthew 5:17-48.] What then is the principle underlying the sabbath law?

The sabbath law required that one day in seven should be set apart for God. God's servants will see this as a pointer to the principle that all our time belongs to God...

What does this mean in practice? ... God must always be in our minds. When we are at work, we will remember God and do only those things that please Him. When we are not at work, we will recognize our leisure hours as a gift from the God who possesses all our time...

The great rest came in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you..." (Matthew 11: 28, 29.) He alone is able to provide mankind with a lasting rest.





Passover patterns

Becky Lewis

This is an extract from a longer article, called 'Walking in newness of life', published in the Christadelphian Isolation League magazine, Spring 2019.

Imagine you are living in the time of Moses. You are an Israelite slave in Egypt. You spend all of your energy working for cruel masters who expect more from you than you are able to give. You are hungry, bruised and broken, and your suffering continues day after day. You cry out to God, your only hope. God hears you and sends Moses to Pharaoh. After nine plagues, God says you must kill a lamb – one you have come to know in your own house. You must identify with that slain lamb by painting its blood on your doorway. In doing this, your house will be passed over by the Angel of Death. And so you are saved from death by the lamb. But then you are trapped between Pharaoh and

the Red Sea. God parts the sea and you travel through, surrounded by the water. This water saves you by providing a way of escape and destroying your captors...

The New Testament writers show that the Passover Lamb points forward to Jesus, who has lived among us and provided the Way to salvation (1 Corinthians 5:7, John 14:6). In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul demonstrates that the whole Exodus story is a type of our own journey to the kingdom. At our baptism, we are able to feel the enormous relief of being set free from sin – a brutal taskmaster who brings only suffering and death. But baptism is just the beginning. In Romans 6, Paul talks about the meaning behind baptism. In

identifying with Jesus' death, we put to death our old selves, so that we are no longer slaves to sin (verses 1 to 7). We rise out of the water a new person, so that "we too may live a new life" (verse 4). We have been given grace (verse 14) so that we can be "slaves to righteousness" (verse 18), producing fruit which leads to the free gift of eternal life (verses 22 and 23). So we are not free to serve ourselves, but to give glory to the God who has rescued us...

Christ's resurrection has provided us with an escape route from the slavery of sin. Baptism is the start of our journey of spiritual growth. If on our journey we rely on our own strength and intellect, or act out of a sense of duty, guilt or fear, we will feel tired, trapped and overwhelmed. But if we prayerfully allow love to overflow from a humble and grateful heart, then our life now has joyful direction, is truly free, and forever new.

Jesus introduces a new Passover feast

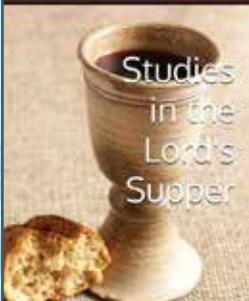


At Jesus' last Passover meal with his disciples, he introduced a new feast – a remembrance meal. Rather than remembering the Exodus, Jesus shocked them all by commanding them to remember HIM.

“Two thousand years ago, on a spring evening in an upper room in Jerusalem, thirteen people met together. Although this event is popularly known as the “Last Supper”, it was actually the “First Supper”. On the night he was betrayed, Jesus did something for the first time. He directed his disciples to come together, in the context of a meal, to remember him, to affirm covenant commitments through self-reflection, and to proclaim his death. Jesus further stated that he expected his followers to participate in this ritual “often”; therefore, the Lord’s Supper began in Jerusalem, continues to this day, and will extend into the kingdom (Luke 22:16,18).”

“We have been given a ritual that enables us to remember in a deep and powerful way, using all of our senses... The human brain is designed to process food and drink as uniquely powerful objects of remembrance. The reason for this is because the area of the brain that processes episodic memories is interrelated with the area that integrates information from the five senses. Like all kinds of memories, food memories also tend to be strongly associated with emotion. Food memories are also highly connected to relationships and social bonds. The emotional effect of food is embedded in memory and strongly related to social ties and group identity.”

Shawn Moynihan



Extracts from Shawn Moynihan, 'Studies in the Lord's Supper', Introduction & page 146.

The whole book is available as a pdf from tidings.org/publications

Life in a 1st century church

Extract from Bible Feed Podcast episode 42

Paul and Lawrence Davenport

Paul: In terms of practice, there's very little, actually, that is fixed. There's baptism, which is the sign of someone joining the Christian community, and then there's the weekly sharing of bread and wine. That's it, really.

Laurence: And I presume around that framework of core activities, the rest of the stuff could be fairly flexible, depending on the ability of the people in the group and also what edified them, I suppose, which was the whole point... It's interesting that it's a really pared down group of things that they were all doing commonly. It contrasts with the Jews observing the Jewish laws and the feasts and all the things that were surrounding Judaism.

P: Yeah, which involved quite precise procedures for doing some things and worshipping certain ways at certain times of the week and the month and the year... A more legalistic approach to religion (where as long as you perform these things and tick these boxes, then that's what you need to do), that sort of approach was very much resisted and Paul talked quite disparagingly about people that were wanting to go back to those "weak and beggarly elements" – the things that they've actually escaped from.

L: We haven't got that same structure as Judaism – we've got a core couple of things that seem to be commonly observed and performed [baptism and communion]. But what are the elements that they could be flexible about?

P: We've seen that where they met and when they met was pretty fluid, and depended on opportunity and fitting it in around working patterns. The order and length of service and so on was probably pretty flexible – as long as it was orderly and suitably reverential. It might even be done in different languages, as long as there was an interpreter there...

Persecution starts to emerge, and so they've got to be pretty flexible about how, where and when they meet and what they do, because they've got to keep things secret.

Digging deeper

Podcast



[Bible Feed](#)

Life in a 1st century church (36 mins)

Podcast

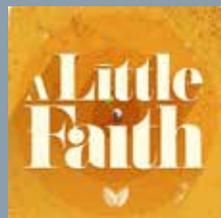


[Pause to Consider](#)

Growing beyond a transactional faith (13 mins)

Bringing gratitude to life (12 mins)

Podcast



[A Little Faith](#)

Shawn Moynihan on his book "The Lord's Supper" (24 mins)

Video



[Bibleunlocked.com](#)

The Tabernacle explained (6 mins)

The remarkable (yet simple) significance of the Tabernacle



Can you think of any times in the Bible when the future kingdom is described as a banquet or a feast?

Scripture Cake

This recipe by Irene Jackson (Cannock) is very cleverly devised to send you thumbing through your Bible to decipher the ingredients.

It is from a booklet produced by Pershore Christadelphians.

Preheat oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven)
Grease & line 23cm cake tin.

100g Jeremiah 1:11 (flaked)
325g Jeremiah 24:2
325g 1 Chronicles 12:40 (begins with R)
550g Leviticus 2:1
2 tsp Galatians 5:9
1 tsp Song of Solomon 4:14 (8 letters)
Pinch Matthew 5:13
6 large Job 39:14
325g Isaiah 7:15 (item 1)
500g Jeremiah 6:20
120ml Song of Solomon 4:11 (item 2)
2 tbsp 1 Samuel 14:29

Hint—for this recipe:

'cane' = sugar

'curds' = butter

'yeast/leaven' = baking powder

Chop almonds and figs, sift the flour with the baking powder, cinnamon and salt.

Cream butter and caster sugar until fluffy.

Gradually mix in beaten eggs, adding a little flour with each addition.

Fold in the rest of the flour along with the honey, milk, fruit and almonds.

Turn into the tin and bake approximately 2½ hours.

The cake is ready when a skewer is inserted and comes out clean.

