*Introduction*

The first three feasts that we have looked at come almost together, Passover on the 14th day of the first month, Nisan, Unleavened bread on the 15th and Firstfruits on the 16th of the first month. With the Passover Lamb being slaughtered for the people as a reminder of their redemption from slavery in Egypt we have seen that Jesus fulfilled this feast himself by becoming our paschal lamb whose blood was shed for the sins of the entire world.

REMEMBER – God found Him faultless (at his baptism), Pilate found no fault in Him, Judas said “I have betrayed innocent blood”

We have see that the feast of unleavened bread, kept for 7 days was the time when no leaven at all was to be found in the Jewish camp or eaten, speaks of sanctification. Jesus was set apart for us, but when he was buried, he would not see decay. We spoke of leaven being sin that decays, but not Jesus, he would not see decay in the grave,

Then we looked at Firstfruits, which speaks of resurrection. The wave offering of the firstfruits of the early barley harvest was in thanksgiving of the harvest to come – obedience = harvest. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we to, who know Him as Saviour also can look forward to a new eternal life with him.

We come now to the last of the spring feasts, and the last that was prophetical fulfilled by the Lord Jesus at his first advent.

**Shavuot or the Feast of weeks.**

It was called the feast of weeks or Pentecost because God commanded that after the feast of Firstfruits they were to count 5o days and then come before him to present another ‘meat’ offering.

We have already looked at the ‘counting of the omer’ and so this feast, one of the three important pilgrimage feasts.

But in Ex 34:22 we see it referred to as the ‘feast of weeks’

***EX 34:22-24 "Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.***

***DEUT 16:10-12 Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you. And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees.***

This feast celebrated another ‘firstfruits’. This time it was the firstfruits of the wheat harvest and the other crops harvested at this time.

This feast involved a different offering:

***LEV 23:17-21 From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings--an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.***

Now there seems to be a difference between Lev 23 and Deut 16. I am reliably informed that Deut 16 is the requirement for the individual and Lev 23 is the ‘main’ requirements brought by the Priests, but I am not convinced and the writings are not clear.

I think the main thing to think upon here is that we have two loaves being brought, made with leaven.

The loaves are waved and not burnt, as leaven was forbidden to be burnt on the altar.

***LEV 2:11 " `Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire.***

This would have happened every year whilst there was a temple, but after the destruction of the temple in 70AD, the sacrifices as good as stopped.

Today, the feast of weeks has become a time of celebrating the ‘giving of the Torah’, the date was roughly the same and so that is what happened. So today we see a Jewish holiday that was changed from an agricultural observance of firstfruits of the wheat harvest to one of a historical event, this happened in 140 AD in order to keep the holiday alive. The reason for this was that the Torah was also given in the third month (EX 19:1). This also became the birthday of Judaism.

Today it is customary to decorate the synagogues with greenery and floral arrangements. Some hang an embroidered green curtain over the ark where the scrolls are stored. The reason for this is twofold, the decorations for Shavuot emphasizes the harvest festival, similar to what we do in our churches today, and secondly it is a reminder that Mt Sinai was at one time covered with green trees and grass.

There are special readings for Shavuot which date back to Temple days, they are taken from Ezekiel 1:1-28 and 3:12 and Hab 2:20-3:19 all of which talk of the glory of the Lord and ends in Habbakuk with these words

***HAB 3:17-19 Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,***

***yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.***

Also at this time the Ten commandments are read, after all, this is what they are celebrating, the giving of the law.

One of the most popular traditions today of this feast is the eating of dairy foods. According to the Rabbi’s this is also a reminder of the law as the words of the Scriptures are like milk and honey to the soul.

The main dairy dishes eaten at this time are cheesecakes, cheese blintzes which are made of cheese rolled in pancakes and fried in a skillet, also kreplach which are dough pockets stuffed with cheese like triangular dumplings.

It is also customary to bake 2 loaves of *hallah* bread. These represent the two loaves waved at the temple and the two tablets of the law given to Moses on Mt Sinai. A seven runged ladder is traditionally formed on the top of the loaves symbolising the ascent of Moses to receive the ten commandments.

Another custom of modern Shavuot is for observant Jews to stay up all night and study and discuss the Torah, in particular they study the opening and closing verses of each Sabbath reading, the opening and closing verses of each book of the Bible and the entire book of Ruth.

As dawn approaches thousands of Jews will then walk to the Western wall plaza to recite the *amidah* prayer together. The amidah or standing prayer has nineteen blessings and dates back over 2000 years. It is the central prayer of all prayer services.

**The fulfilment**

The Greek name for Shavuot is ‘pentecost’ because it is 50 days from firstfruits.

Jesus had ascended 40 days after his resurrection. He had told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came.

As we know the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus and 10 days after his ascension. He filled the disciples and the Church was born.

For the feast of weeks, two loaves were brought into the temple, those two loaves represented Jew and Gentile

***EPH 2:14-15 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,***

This was the new covenant, Jew and Gentile were now one in Christ. Through his death he had torn the curtain of the holy of holies, he had taken over the role of the priest as the one and only sacrifice for sin.

Now His spirit was being poured out on all men, Jew and Gentile.

At the giving of the Torah at Sinai, we are told that when Moses came down he found idolatry

***EX 32:25-28 Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him.***

***Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: `Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.' " The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.***

So at Pentecost when the Spirit of God was poured out, three thousand were saved.

Our God is a God of balance.

The Holy Spirit’s work is one of cleansing by fire. When we come to know Jesus as our savior and the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, He comes to cleanse us from the leaven of our daily lives, to burn sin out of the believer as it were. As we “gladly accept” the Word of God for our lives we will want to live lives of obedience. The Holy Spirit enables us, empowers us to do this.

*Conclusion*

So as we come to the end of the Spring feasts we see that Jesus really did not abolish the law but kept it perfectly

***MT 5:17-18 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.***

His life was a total fulfillment of the prophetic role of the feasts.

We see him fulfill perfectly the Passover lamb, and we are reminded of the lamb sitting on the throne of heaven in the book of Revelation

***REV 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.***

So we come to the end of the Spring feasts, all fulfilled by Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection and the giving of His Holy Spirit.

He fulfilled each one to the very letter of the law.

Every part of Gods great salvation plan, completed in every detail and at exactly the right time.

***ROM 5:6-9 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!.***

Next week DV, we see the feast of trumpets, the first of the fall feasts – still to be fulfilled. Enjoy your day and God bless you.