Jesus in the Jewish Holidays

This document contains the teacher notes for three Sunday school lessons on the topic of Jesus in the Jewish Holidays. There is a complementary document containing student handouts to be distributed to listeners to aid in retention while teaching this material.

I claim no infallibility relative to the material presented here. It is, as many have said before, beggars showing other beggars where to find bread. As errors are found, please let me know so I can correct. The theology expressed here should not be construed as representing the theology of Stuart Heights Baptist Church (especially when I am wrong or when I am being an idiot).

These teachings are provided free in the spirit of Matthew 10:8b.

The formatting is as follows:

- **bold green text are quotes from commentators** (several dozen different commentaries are used throughout)
- **bold red text is the Scripture** (NKJV is used unless otherwise noted. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.)
- **bold blue text are Bible references**
- **bold purple text are questions to consider asking while teaching this material**
- **highlighted, bold, and underlined text in the teacher notes are answers to blanks in the student handouts**
- **plain black text are the teachers’ comments**

The file formats available online are only the PDFs, but if the native Microsoft Word files are needed, I am more than happy to email them. I can be reached at jim314@yahoo.com.

The audio recordings of all of these teachings themselves are available via our class podcast. Many thanks to David Barber for his faithfulness in this area.

I hope these resources (especially the last page) assist in a better understanding of the Jewish Holidays. Again, feel free to contact me with questions or feedback.

Grace and peace,

Jim Fleming
Hixson, Tennessee
December 2015
Jesus in the Jewish Holidays, Week 1: Jewish Calendar

Introduction
The holiday season is a busy time at our house—it probably is at yours too. There are times I love the holidays, but there are times where they are overwhelming. The travel, the additional events, the additional expectations—all add up to ‘more’ in an already busy schedule. I thought, in the midst of all of the busyness, we could learn more about the Jewish holidays—and specifically, how to understand them, what they mean for us today, and how Jesus fits in. And maybe, just maybe, we will see how Jesus fits in our holidays as well.

Who, What, Where, When, & Why
As we go through this series, I hope to be able to answer many of the following questions:

- Who came up with the Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays? God (then it was morphed by man)
- Who do the Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays point to? God (and our relationship and need for Him)
- Who was in charge of the Jewish calendar? God defined it, but the Jewish leadership put in stricter calculations later
- What makes the Jewish calendar different from our Gregorian calendar? A lot
- What are the Jewish holidays about? God, history, and the rhythms of life
- Where are the Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays described? The Bible (in part) and Jewish teachings flesh out a lot of the details existing today
- Where do the Jewish holidays place? Some are only in Israel, but some are for wherever
- When do the Jewish holidays occur? Year-round—there is almost always something happening
- When were the Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays established? As early as Genesis 1
- Why do we have the Jewish holidays? To know God better and to remember the past
- How have the Jewish calendar and Jewish holidays changed since Old Testament times? Some have changed quite a bit and a few have stayed relatively the same
- How does Jesus fit in? All over the place (most of it we will see starting next week)

Phillips on Colossians: [The Jews] added to [the Mosaic Law] the Halachoth (rabbinical decisions on all questions of ceremony and ritual). They added the Mishna, the legal code that resulted from those rabbinical decisions. Then they added all kinds of sacred legends, the Gemara. Then came the Midrashim, commentaries on the Old Testament, and the Hagada, reasonings based on these commentaries, and finally the kabbala, full of mystical teachings and far-fetched allegories.

Schedule
12/06/2015: Jewish Calendar
12/13/2015: Jewish Holidays
12/20/2015: Jewish Messiah
Knowledge Objectives
1. To better understand the Jewish calendar
2. To better understand the Jewish holidays
3. To recognize Jesus’ place in the Jewish holidays
4. To make room for Jesus in our current holidays

The Jewish Calendar

Introduction
We (in the West) are used to showing time in straight lines.

![Diagram of the Jewish calendar, showing a circular pattern with months labeled in Hebrew order: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.]

The Jewish manner is circular and recurring. It emphasizes the rhythms of life. It has been described as a rising helix. Taking our Gregorian/Western/Christian calendar (the term we use for our 12-month calendar with the current leap year system) and putting it in a Jewish view results in something like this:

![Circular diagram showing the Jewish calendar with months in a helical pattern.]

We will start the Jewish calendar by looking at some of the basic components: the day, the week, the month, the season, and the year. We won’t look at the hour and the minute since they don’t show up as much on the calendar.
The day
The most common Hebrew word for day is yowm (YOME). It is defined in Genesis 1:5b: And the evening and the morning were the first day. God defined a day as an evening and a morning.

The Jewish day begins at the start of evening (sundown) and ends at the end of the day (sundown). It starts with a celestial event and ends with a celestial event. Our Gregorian day begins at midnight—twelve hours from a celestial event where the sun is in the highest position of the sky and always lasts 24 hours. The length of the Jewish day is dictated by the duration of that particular day—something that can change (rather) wildly throughout the year and across the globe.

As you would imagine, days are mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible. The most important thing to remember about the Jewish day is it begins sooner than our Gregorian day.

The week
The most common Hebrew word for week is shabuwa (sha-vu-EH). It is not defined in the Bible as seven days, but it means seven, period of seven (days or years), a heptad. The definition (even though the word is not used) is drawn from Genesis 2:1-3: 1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. As far as I can tell, there is no weekly celestial event. It is tied to God’s example to us of rest after work.

Jews use the names for the days of the week in Genesis 1): (the table to the left is from JewFAQ.org). The names for the days of the week are, in Hebrew, simply ‘First Day,’ ‘Second Day,’ ‘Third Day,’ etc.

The Jewish/Hebrew week begins at sundown on our Saturday (Sunday) and ends at sundown on Saturday.

The month
The most common Hebrew word for month is chodesh (HO-desh—and the HO is guttural). It, like the week, is not defined in the Bible the beginning of a new moon, but it means new moon or month. The definition of the first month of the year occurs in Exodus 12:1-2: 1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 2 “This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

Wikipedia: A “new moon” is the day on which the first visible crescent of the moon is observed. It occurs 29 or 30 days after the preceding visible crescent. Hebrew for Christians: The appearance of the new moon is called Rosh Chodesh (“head of the month”).

If it feels like basing a calendar on a new moon would wreak havoc with the year, you are correct, but the Jews put in place a leap month to keep the year ‘whole.’ But more on that a little later.

Several times in the Bible (Genesis 7:11; 8:4-5; 8:13-14; 1 Chronicles 27:1-15) months are identified by number only. There are many, many verses commanding certain things to be done at the beginning of a month (Numbers 10:10; 28:11).
The Hebrew word for season is *mowed* (mow-AID). It, like the week and the month, is not defined in the Bible as three months long, but it means an appointed place, an appointed meeting, or an appointed time. The implication is something specific would occur during these times (i.e., like the holy days). The first mention of seasons occurs in Genesis 1:14: Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.” This gives us some indication as to why God made lights—for division of time and for signs and seasons—to tell us of His creative ability, to break up the monotony of everything always being the same, and to give us an indication (read: Romans 1) of His presence. Think of seasons as placeholders.

If you haven’t figured it out yet, time is God’s idea. He defined it and He uses it. Each of the seasons has specific festivals to celebrate events in Jewish history. The Jewish calendar is repetitive and reviewing.

The Jewish calendar is also not going anywhere. Genesis 8:22 outlines God’s permanent plan for them.

The Jewish seasons are similar to our seasons, but since they are very agricultural, also include stratifications like cold/dry/rain. But, as mentioned before, the cyclical nature of the Jewish calendar makes a diagram like the one below (from JewFAQ.org) a good way to demonstrate the data.
Note: The modern spellings of the months vary depending upon the source of the data.

The year
The Hebrew word for year is shaneh (shu-NA). It, like the week, month, and season, is not defined in the Bible as twelve months long, but it means year. The first mention of year also occurs in Genesis 1:14: Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years.”

Since the Jewish calendar syncs up to the seasons of the year, just using lunar months would cause the calendar to be ‘off’ about 11 days a year. To fix this, the Jews use a lunisolar calendar (the phase of the moon and solar positions are important) with a leap month. An extra month is added on certain years to keep the calendar lined up with the proper seasons. Every 19 years there are seven leap years. Lunisolar calendars are used for of their relationship to creation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Modern name (NKJV)</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Bible reference</th>
<th>Gregorian equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nisan (Abib/Nisan)</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Exodus 12:2; 13:4; Esther 3:7</td>
<td>Mar - Apr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Iyar (Ziv)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Kings 6:1</td>
<td>Apr - May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sivan (Sivan)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Esther 8:9</td>
<td>May - Jun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tammuz (N/A)</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jun - Jul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Av (N/A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jul - Aug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Elul (Elul)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nehemiah 6:15</td>
<td>Aug - Sep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tishri (Ethanim)</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>1 Kings 8:2</td>
<td>Sep - Oct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cheshvan (Bul)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Kings 6:38</td>
<td>Oct - Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kislev (Chislev)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zechariah 7:1</td>
<td>Nov - Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tevet (Tebeth)</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Esther 2:16</td>
<td>Dec - Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Shevat (Shebat)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zechariah 1:7</td>
<td>Jan - Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Adar I (leap month) (N/A)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feb - Mar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Adar II (Adar)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Esther 3:7</td>
<td>Feb - Mar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*denotes names recorded prior to the Babylonian captivity

Because of the leap month and the varying number of days in some months (some have 29 days, some have 30 days, and some can be either), a Jewish year can have 353, 354, 355, 383, 384 or 385 days.

The Bible had an enormous impact on the Jewish calendar. However, the Bible does not stipulate the inclusion of a leap month. We think the priests and rabbis came up with the leap month system to insure the holidays stayed in line with the seasons.

The accuracy of the lunisolar Jewish calendar is amazing—it is only off by one day every 224 years. I read the Jews knew this when they established this system and decided that level of precision was good enough since they were sure the Messiah would come back prior to ever amounting to anything significant.

Where are we now?
Today in the Jewish calendar: Yom Rishon (first day) 24th (day of the month) of Kislev (month), 5776 (year)

What does the 5776 stand for? The Jewish calendar begins approximately one year prior to creation.
Aside: If you are curious how this date was determined, think genealogies.
The Gregorian calendar
Before you begin to think the Jewish calendar is a hot mess, let's look at our own Gregorian calendar.

Today in the Gregorian calendar: Sunday, December 6, 2015

How many days are in this year in the Gregorian calendar? 365

Does every year have 365 days? No

Why not? Leap years occurring every fourth year, right? Wrong. Every fourth year except for years divisible by 100 and not divisible by 400 is a leap year. 1600 and 2000 were leap years while 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not. (This specific change is why we call our calendar Gregorian—and not Julian).

How many months do we have? 12

Every year? Yes

How many days in each month? 28-31

Do the number of days in each month change? Yes (February for leap years)

Starting in January, what are our holidays? January – New Years’ Day, MLK; February – Valentine’s, President’s Day; March/April/May – Easter; May – Memorial Day; July – Independence Day; September – Labor Day; October – Columbus Day, Halloween; November – Veterans Day; December – Christmas

Have the holidays always remained the same? Not at all.

Our calendar really isn't 'normal' after all—we're just used to it. Every calendar has quirks and oddities.

Apply (So what is the point?)

1. The Jewish calendar is not our Gregorian calendar
2. God is a god of order. We see this in creation and we see this in His commands to His people to be observant of the world around them. We see this in the fact that He put the right things in each season.
3. The rhythm of life is recurring and not linear

Personalize (Now what do I do?)

1. Learn the Jewish calendar (strive to have at least a basic knowledge of Biblical things—history, culture and life in the Bible—if we are to ever interpret and apply Scripture to our lives properly, this will be important; and for heaven’s sake, don’t be prideful in ignorance)
2. Periodically examine my season. Look to see if we are doing too much or too little. Stress is sometimes saying yes to too many things.
3. Pay attention to history. All of Creation screams out God exists and He is trying to communicate with us—so we should pay attention. If you have ever felt like you just wake up to repeat the same thing, it is true—because we do. God baked repetition in to life. Don’t despise it—look for God in it.

Next week: Jewish holidays

Resources
JewFAQ.org, Hebrew4Christians.com
Jesus in the Jewish Holidays, Week 2: Jewish Holidays

Review
Last week we looked at the Jewish calendar. We saw that it is a lunisolar calendar—one based on the lunar (moon) cycles, but also brought back in to alignment with the solar seasons through the use of a leap month. We talked about the cyclical nature of the Jewish calendar in that it was always moving forward, but looking backward. In today’s lesson, we will examine what the Jews were looking back at.

Introduction
Have you seen NBC’s new TV show, Superstore? It’s a big box retail version of The Office. In one of the early episodes, America Ferrara’s character, Amy, is lamenting the cyclical nature of retail. She talks about how she will soon remove the Christmas holiday merchandise and stock Valentine’s Day merchandise. And then stock Easter, and then July 4, and then back-to-school, and then Thanksgiving, and then Christmas—again. The cycle never ends.

Jewish Holidays
The major, biblical Jewish holidays can be seen in Leviticus 23. As we go through Leviticus 23, keep an eye on the circular calendar on your handout. You will quickly notice that the holidays noted on the graphic are not all listed in your notes—that is because the Jews are masters at adding holidays.

Here’s a quote I skipped from last week’s lesson: Phillips on Colossians: [The Jews] added to [the Mosaic Law] the Halachoth (rabbinical decisions on all questions of ceremony and ritual). They added the Mishna, the legal code that resulted from those rabbinical decisions. Then they added all kinds of sacred legends, the Gemara. Then came the Midrashim, commentaries on the Old Testament, and the Hagada, reasonings based on these commentaries, and finally the kabbala, full of mystical teachings and far-fetched allegories. We will stick to the holidays in Leviticus 23.

When reading through the descriptions given in Leviticus 23 and looking at the calendars, remember society in this time was primarily agricultural—everything revolved around the crops.
Leviticus 23:1-2: 1 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.

The first up, to our non-Jewish eyes, may not look like a holiday. But it occurs more often than any other.

Sabbath (every week)
Leviticus 23:3: 3 ‘Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.’

Our word ‘Sabbath’ comes from the Old Testament Hebrew word shabath (shaw-BATH). When used as a noun, it simply refers to the day called Sabbath. When used as a verb, it means to cease, desist, rest, or put an end to (typically translated ‘rest’, it more literally means, ‘to cease’).

This is an important concept to solidify early in this lesson—that the Sabbath is not meant for laziness. It is not meant for sitting around and not doing anything—rather it is meant as actively abstaining from work in order to do good, to enjoy life, and to identify with the seven-day-a-week rhythm of life.
It is important to think about how wise God was in His decision to command His people to purposefully cease from their work. **How often do I purposefully cease from work?**

Here are a few examples: God stopped in **Genesis 1-2**. The Sabbath preparations are described in **Exodus 16:22-30**. Violations of the Sabbath are described in **Numbers 15:32-36** and **Nehemiah 13:15-22**. In **Exodus 31:16-17**, God is described as being refreshed (literally taking a breath). Jesus talks about the Sabbath in **Luke 4:16** and heals on the Sabbath in **Matthew 12:1-13** and **Luke 13:10-17**.

An important question for us to answer is, “**Are Christians required to keep the Sabbath today?**”

**Colossians 2:16-17**. David Guzik: **The Sabbath observed by Israel was a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.** We do not live in the shadows. We have a rest in Jesus that is ours to live in every day. However, though we are free from the legal obligation of the Sabbath, we dare not ignore the importance of a day of rest as God has built us so that we need one.

Observing the Sabbath and/or resting isn’t easy. Alice Walker: **Anybody can observe the Sabbath, but making it holy surely takes the rest of the week.**

**Passover (Pesach, Nisan 14)**
**Leviticus 23:4-5**: 4 ‘These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. 5 On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD’s Passover. Passover is from the Hebrew word, **pacach** (peh-SAHK), meaning to ‘pass over,’ or to ‘spring over’ and is a remembrance of the deliverance of the Israelites from the **Egyptians** in **Exodus 12**. Obedient Israelites were passed over from God’s wrath executed by the Angel of the Lord.

Passover is the first feast holiday of the Jewish year. In modern times, the Passover is a huge event in Jewish life and we will study it in more detail next week.

**Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi, Nisan 15-22)**
**Leviticus 23:6-8**: 6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. 7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. 8 But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.” In Bible times, leaven represented **sin**, so a period of eating unleavened bread would symbolize cleaning up one’s life. This focus on eating only unleavened bread lasted for seven days.

**First Fruits (Yom habikkurim, Nisan 16)**
**Leviticus 23:9-14**: 9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. 12 And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. 13 Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14 You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. At the end of this seven days of unleavened bread is the Feast of the First Fruits. **Hebrew4Christians.com**: The feast for acknowledging the **fertility** of the land He gave the Israelites.
Weeks/Pentecost (Shavu’ot (shav-oo-AUGHT), Sivan 6)

_Leviticus 23:15-22_ 15 ‘And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. 16 Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. 17 You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD. 18 And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the LORD, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the LORD. 19 Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. 20 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 proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. _It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations._

22 ‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: _I am the LORD your God._’”

Pentecost means the fiftieth day. While not mentioned in _Leviticus 23_ as such, it is a celebration of God giving Moses the ten commandments at Sinai.

Hebrew4Christians.com: In late May or early June, Shavo’ot marked the summer harvest.

Trumpets (Yom Teru’ah, Tishri 1)

_Leviticus 23:23-25_ 23 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 24 “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. 25 You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.’” This is Rosh Hashanah even though the Bible never refers to it as such. In modern Jewish life, Tishri 1 begins the High Holidays (which have nothing to do with marijuana). Hebrew4Christians: The high priest actually blew the trumpet so that the faithful would stop harvesting to worship. Trumpets were an easy way to get everyone’s attention.

The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur, Tishri 10)

_Leviticus 23:26-32_ 26 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 27 “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. 28 And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. 29 For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. 30 And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. 31 You shall do no manner of work; _it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings._ 32 It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.” Afflict means to occupy, afflict, bow down, and humble.

In modern Jewish life, Yom Kippur ends the High Holidays. Hebrew4Christians.com: _Leviticus 23:27_ provides a day of confession, the highest of holy days.

Four things converge: the holiest day, the holiest man, the holiest place, and possibly the holiest word
Tabernacles (Sukkot, Tishri 15)

Leviticus 23:33-44: 33 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 34 “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. 35 On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. 36 For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.

37 'These are the feasts of the LORD which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day— 38 besides the Sabbaths of the LORD, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the LORD.

39 'Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. 40 And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 41 You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 42 You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, 43 that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.’”

44 So Moses declared to the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD.

Hebrew4Christians.com: God wanted to celebrate the fact that He provided shelter for the Israelites in the wilderness. Each year on Tabernacles, devout Jews build little shelters or “booths” (sukkot) outside their houses and worshipped in them.

Tabernacles (like most Jewish holidays) looks back to a prior event. The Jewish holidays tell God’s story.

Apply (So what is the point?)

1. God wants His people to remember
2. God has always had a plan (a very precise plan)
3. God is telling a story

Personalize (Now what do I do?)

1. Rest, feast, and remember (and celebrate the rhythm)
2. Pay attention (to what comes next, to what came before, and—next week—to how Jesus fits in)
3. Learn how to tell the story

Next week: Jewish Messiah

We will look at how all of these holidays fit into telling the biggest story the world has ever known—that of the Jewish Messiah—Jesus Christ.

Resources
JewFAQ.org, Hebrew4Christians.com
Jesus in the Jewish Holidays, Week 3: Jewish Messiah

Review
In week one, we looked at the Jewish calendar. We saw that it is a lunisolar calendar—one based on the lunar (moon) cycles, but also brought back in to alignment with the solar seasons through the use of a leap month. We talked about the cyclical nature of the Jewish calendar in that it was always moving forward, but looking backward.

In last week’s lesson, we looked at the eight major holidays of the Old Testament Jewish calendar—to get a feel for what the Jews were looking back at. We looked at Leviticus 23 and saw Sabbath, Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.

Today, we will look at the prophetic nature of each of these (looking forward) and how Jesus is involved in their fulfillment.

Introduction
Terry Brown once taught me that biblical prophecy is like looking at mountains. The mountains up close are clearer than those in the distance. The same is true with Bible prophecy—the farther away you are, the less you understand. It is easier to understand things that are close. God’s story unfolds forward and backward at the same time—because God is always telling more and more of His story.
Jewish Messiah
Jesus is the Messiah. We know this from John 4:25-26. What the Jews did not know (if they did, it is not recorded anywhere in the Gospels) was that when Jesus came, He was fulfilling the Jewish holidays. They did not see God’s larger story at play and how the Messiah was the leading Man.

Sabbath (every week)
Jesus’ relationship with the Sabbath is shown in several New Testament passages, but the overriding principle in all of them is that it is OK to do good on the Sabbath and that the Jewish leaders of the day had a lot of rules around the Sabbath (Matthew 12; Mark 2; 3; Luke 6; 13; 14; John 5; 9).

Perhaps the best text for showing what Jesus thought is Mark 2:27. Jesus tells His disciples The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. He is trying to explain to them that God put boundaries in place for them. He did not put them in place for the boundaries. Jesus always goes back to the intent of the Law. God rested for us, not for Him.

How does Jesus fit? Mark 2:28: Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. He is our rest.

Passover (Pesach, Nisan 14)
The modern Passover is a greatly expanded version of the New Testament Passover—which was a greatly expanded version of the Old Testament Passover. We will look at the New Testament Passover.

The New Testament Passover was all about remembering the Israelites’ deliverance from Egypt. Jews would travel to Jerusalem every year to celebrate it there (see Luke 2:41). During and after the meal (the Seder), four cups of wine were drunk, celebrating and remembering God’s four “I will” statements in Exodus 6:6-7: “I will bring you out,” “I will rescue you,” “I will redeem you,” “I will take you.”

When Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples immediately before His death (Matthew 26:26-30), Jesus revealed the true meaning of Passover—it was about Jesus. The bread was His body. The wine was His blood. Jesus drank the first two cups with His disciples, declared the third to be the New Covenant, and told them He would drink the fourth with them in the kingdom.

One more thing—How old was Jesus when He died? Around 33, right? Where does the Bible say that? It doesn’t. We assume it to be the case because Luke 3:23 says Jesus was about 30 when He began ministering and there are at least two or three distinct Passovers mentioned in the Gospels (John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55)—putting Him around 33 when He was crucified—at Passover.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8: 6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Jesus is the Passover lamb that was killed for us. The Passover represents Jesus’ death.

Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi, Nisan 15-22)
Since leaven represents sin, it is easy to see how Jesus fits in to this feast—He had no sin. Jesus is the unleavened bread. While it is being made, unleavened bread looks different than leavened bread—it doesn’t rise. It looks dead. The feast of the Unleavened Bread represents Jesus’ burial.
**First Fruits (Yom habikkurim, Nisan 16)**

The Feast of First Fruits was a celebration of the first fruits of the land—the springing forth of new life. As such, it represents the resurrection of Jesus. Paul explains it to us in **1 Corinthians 15:20-21**: 

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.

Jesus is the firstfruits of the **dead**. He is the most important person ever to rise from the dead and His resurrection is what ours will look like one day. (First fruits implies the later fruits will be the same kind)

**Weeks/Pentecost (Shavu’ot, Sivan 6)**

Along with Trumpets and Passover, Pentecost is probably an easy connection to make for the New Testament believer. As we discussed last week, Pentecost is a celebration of God giving Moses the ten commandments at Sinai—fifty days after the Passover. Starting in **Exodus 19**, the rest of **Exodus** is God giving Moses the Law. Moses comes down off of the mountain a few times to deal with the Israelites’ sinful behavior, but the majority of **Exodus** happens on Mount Sinai.

One of the times Moses comes down, this happens: **Exodus 32:25-28**: 

25 Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), 26 then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side—come to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. 27 And he said to them, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’” 28 So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. 3,000 people died during the giving of the Law.

Fast forward to the New Testament Pentecost in **Acts 2** when the Holy Spirit is given, Peter preaches, the result is **Acts 2:40-41**: 

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 3,000 people were saved at Pentecost.

Jesus is the **testimony** of Pentecost. He was the object of the Law and the object of the Spirit’s testimony.

**Romans 8:1-4**: The Law brings death. The Spirit brings life. The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.

**Trumpets (Yom Teru’ah, Tishri 1)**

As we were reminded last week, **Hebrew4Christians**: The high priest actually blew the trumpet so that the faithful would stop harvesting to worship. In modern terms, this is Rosh Hashanah.

The Feast of Trumpets is just stupid easy to see Jesus in. Quite simply, Jesus **calls** believers to be with Him. As Jesus said in **Matthew 24:30-31**: 

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Unlike the Feast of Trumpets, we do not know when the rapture of the church will occur. **1 Corinthians 15:51-53**: 

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur, Tishri 10)
The Day of Atonement was not a feast day—it was a fasting day. Affliction and humbling of soul and body were called for as the high priest would offer the yearly sacrifice for the people. It was a tense time of waiting to see if the annual offering was accepted.

However, today we have a true and better high priest. Jesus is our High Priest. His sacrifice of Himself was done once and for all.

We are not as confident as to the future prophetic applications of the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles, so we will hold them in an open hand.

Many scholars feel the Day of Atonement will have prophetic completion at Jesus’ Second Coming. A significant part of the defense of this view is in the relative closeness of the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles to the Trumpets. And since the Second Coming is the next event on God’s calendar, it fits.

Tabernacles (Sukkot, Tishri 15)
The last of the holidays is the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was a week-long period of living in temporary shelters as a reminder of the booths the Israelites lived in when fleeing Egypt.

Many modern scholars feel this is where Jesus will, ‘tabernacle’ with believers when He rules and reigns on earth and in heaven—a picture of the millennial kingdom. This may be what is described in Ezekiel 37:24-28 and Zechariah 14.

Summary
The four seasons as viewed by Hebrew4Christians: Spring – deliverance (Passover and Pentecost); Summer – preparation (17th of Tammuz, Tish‘ah B’Av); Fall – repentance (Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles); Winter – victory (Hanukkah, Purim)

Going back to Leviticus 23, we see it is the story of the entire plan of redemption.

Apply (So what is the point?)
1. The Jewish holidays are about Jesus
2. Jesus completes the Jewish holidays
3. God tells His story through history

Personalize (Now what do I do?)
1. Make Jesus the centerpiece of your holidays
2. Be complete in Jesus
3. Tell God’s history
Resources

Jewish Calendar

Taken from *Jesus and the Jewish Festivals*, by Gary M Burge

**Online Resources**
[JewFAQ.org](http://JewFAQ.org), [Hebrew4Christians.com](http://Hebrew4Christians.com)

**Print Resources**
*Jesus and the Jewish Festivals* by Gary M Burge