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**Day 51 – February 20**

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**The Laws of Moses (1450 – 1400 BCE)**

***The Special Feasts***

***Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread***

***Feast of Weeks (Harvest or Firstfruits)***

***Feast of Trumpets***

***Day of Atonement***

***Feast of Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering)***

**Readings: Exodus 23:14-17; 34:18, 22-24; Leviticus 16:1-43; 23:4-32, 37-38, 44; Numbers 9:13-14; 28:16-31; 29:1-40; Deuteronomy 16:1-17**

***Reflections:***

- Israel had week long parties three times a year. This shows God's value for celebration and community. Much of this has been lost in our culture and families.
- The Feast of Unleavened Bread centers on the concept of yeast. Yeast could not be used when they left because they had to rush (Exodus 12:34). Yeast came to symbolize a type of unbelieving wickedness (Matthew. 16:6, 12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 1 Corinthians 5:6-7; Galatians 5:9). It is referred to as a teaching, a form of hypocrisy, wickedness that works through a smaller group influencing a larger group. In the context of the Passover if people wanted to be ready to respond to God, they couldn't use yeast. In other words, an unbelieving and impure heart causes a person to miss what God is doing. This was definitely the case for the Pharisees and Herod in Jesus' day. They had a chance to respond but their hearts were not ready because they were consumed with their own unbelief and wickedness. It is noteworthy that it is not only sin that is the issue. It is a propensity towards unbelief and wickedness that is the problem. It keeps a person stuck and unable to respond to the timing of God's salvation.
- Feast of weeks took place for seven weeks or fifty days (hence why it is later referred to as Pentecost by Christ-followers) to celebrate the firstfruits of the harvest. This was an opportunity for the community to celebrate God's provision in the harvest as they gave back to God the first fruits of what they were receiving. This celebration of offering to God the first fruits of the new harvest is the same time when the first three thousand Christ-

followers came to faith at Pentecost and tongues was given as a sign that now all nations were included in the harvest.

- We will notice that there is some repetition in these sections in what is captured in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- The Feast of Trumpets - Was this day to announce the coming of the Day of Atonement? It is a lesser day but only ten days away from the Day of Atonement and remembering the Exodus. It may be a day set up of sorts that builds anticipation and gets everyone focused and ready for the most important day in the year. With this noted it functioned as a celebration day to start the New Year and today is called Rosh Hashanah.
- Day of Atonement - As you read through these texts you will see how much of an externalized mime this is for the people. The preparation of the Priest, the sacrifice for the Priest, the scapegoat, the confession over the scapegoat, and the other actions are all meant to be externalized, visual pictures of spiritual realities.
- Key statement: "...on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then before the Lord you will be clean from all your sins." It set up the clear image that something else, one single thing - in this case a goat - could take all the sins of all the people away from them with only the simple act of laying on hands and prayer (laying on of hands again - sign of transfer). This image set up a picture to understand what God did for us in Christ. He became the one who took away our sins and made us "clean". As Christ-follower we believe it was still Jesus who took their sins. Just as we look back to Christ, they unknowing looked forward to Christ in these simple acts of faith.
- This was a day of fasting, not celebrating, a day of being completely in touch with your need.
- The Feast of Tabernacles – The purpose of this feast was to remember the wilderness as everyone tents it. Again here we see, "On the first day of Tabernacles the sacrifice we bring is...la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la." As we read it, it is almost like our twelve days of Christmas.
- Notice the end the celebration is for everyone in the community: women, men, girls, boys, aliens, orphans, and widows. The poor or needy are always noted. Also, the blessing of God is to result in "your joy being complete." Knowing God's blessing is to bring a satisfying joy that meets all needs. I am reminded of Jacob who was always striving to get blessing. He finally meets God and is broken (God touches his hip) and in that place of brokenness comes to submit to God and finally receives his true blessing (name change - new identity). When he later meets with Esau he is willing to give away his blessings in gifts to Esau because he knows he is blessed by God and God has met all his needs. It is a great reminder about learning to struggle and submit to God to have our needs met, especially in the desert seasons, and in that place of wrestling with God, find that his blessing will meet all our needs.