

Second Lesson

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (CHAPTERS 1 & 2)

I. WHO IS JOHN THE BAPTIST? John the Baptist was the last great prophet prior to the birth of Christ. He was a rabbi and minister who foretold the coming of the Messiah, paving the way for Christ by preparing the mind, bodies and spirits of his disciples for his arrival. Prophet Malachi in 3:1-3 prophecies of John's coming. He is believed to have belonged to an ascetic group known as Essenes. Who were the Essenes? The Essenes were a Jewish mystical sect somewhat resembling the Pharisees living Qumran caves near the Dead Sea. They lived lives of ritual purity and separation. They originated about 100 B.C., and disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Essenes are not directly mentioned in Scripture. It has been popular among some scholars to claim that John the Baptist was an Essene. There are some similarities between John and the Essenes: 1. John was in the desert (Luke 1:80). The Essenes were in the desert. 2. Both John and the Essenes used Isaiah 40:3 to describe themselves as the voice in the wilderness. 3. The baptism (or washing) practiced by John and the Essenes required a change of heart. The Essenes as a sect of Judaism do not exist today.

John's disciples: He also drew his share of disciples. The first two peoples Andrew and John that Jesus called to follow him were first followers of John (John 1:35 - 39). Philip was probably another disciple of John the Baptist. As a charismatic and engaging preacher, he cultivated a following of disciples. After they received baptism, they spread John's message and predicting the Messiah and bringing the former Jews back to their faiths.

II. JOHN INTRODUCES JESUS AS "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD": These words, 'Behold the Lamb of God' are precious words in our Eucharistic liturgy. In the holy mass, we pray this phrase three times. We hear them first in the Gloria: "Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us". We hear them again in the Agnus Dei: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us; Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace. And we again hear from the priest who takes the consecrated host in his hand and prays these words of invitation to the Holy Communion: Behold the Lamb of God. Behold him who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb

John the Baptist, described Jesus twice as "the Lamb of God. (Jn 1:29 &36) For us in the 21st Century, these are rather strange words. Yet to the average Jew of the first Century

it wouldn't have been! So what would the expression "Lamb of God" have meant to the first century Jew?

What is the Passover Lamb in the OT? Passover was the annual celebration, when the Jews remembered how God had delivered them from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus is told in the first 12 chapters of the Book of Exodus. Around about 1500 BC, God called Moses to lead the Jews out of Egypt. But Pharaoh steadfastly refused to let them leave. In that particular situation of the Jews in Egypt - with Pharaoh steadfastly resisting, God sent 10 plagues on the Egyptians. It was the 10th plague that the Jews particularly remembered at Passover. The 10th plague was when God sent the Angel of Death to destroy the entire first born in the land of Egypt. However, the Angel of Death passed over (from which we get the word PASSOVER) those Jewish households where the blood of a lamb - without blemish - had been sprinkled on the door lintels. God commanded the Jews to celebrate this act of salvation from Egypt by holding a festival each year, which they called the "Feast of Passover". In that festival, each Jewish household was to sacrifice a lamb WITHOUT BLEMISH each year during the Feast of Passover. This lamb was known as the Passover Lamb

Jesus the Lamb of God so when Jesus was called the Lamb of God, 1. He was understood as the lamb without blemish (spotless purity - he had no sin of his own to atone for) 2. He was the lamb offering protection to the Jewish households from the wrath of the Angel of death in Egypt. So Jesus, the Lamb of God offers us protection from the effects of our sin which ultimately leads to separation from God or eternal death. As the Passover lamb died in place of the first born, so Jesus died in our place - for our sins. As John the Baptist put it. Jesus is "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".

The Lamb: The various OT sacrifices prefigured the sacrifice of Christ on the cross in NT. The difference between the OT sacrifice and NT sacrifice is that in the OT, the blood of the animal was involved whereas in the NT, the blood of Jesus himself involved for the sins of the people. The death of Jesus on the cross is a perfect and ultimate sacrifice.

III. JESUS WILL BAPTIZE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. What is the difference between John's baptism with the water and Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit? After Jesus had risen from the dead, He instructed His apostles to "...wait for the Promise of the Father which you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:4-5). This promise was first fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), and the baptism of the Spirit joins every believer to the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). While John's baptism cleanses

us from our original sin, Jesus' baptism makes us children of kingdom of God and the Church.

Baptism with the fire: The baptism of fire refers to the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:2-3). It is important to note that these were tongues as of fire, not literal fire.

IV. CAN ANYTHING GOOD COME FROM NAZARETH? It is a very disturbing question. It sounds very negative and racial in nature. This question is very much discussed by theologians and biblical scholars. A careful study of this place Nazareth, from the traditional and biblical point of view, gives us some revelation to answer this disturbing question "can anything good come from Nazareth?"

Nazareth is a town in Galilee, in northern part of Israel. Jesus grew in that place as a teenager with his parents till he came to public life at the age of 30 and that is why Jesus was called as Jesus of Nazareth. But the NT shows this place and the people of Nazareth very negatively. For example: When Jesus came to the synagogue of Nazareth and preached to his own people, they had lack of faith and as a result, Jesus could not do much in his hometown. The very word Nazareth was an expression of despise and contempt during Jesus' time and they did not expect anything good from that place. we read in John 7:52 "prophet does not come from Galilee".

During the time of crucifixion, Pilate placed a title for Jesus as Jesus the Nazarene Jesus Nazarene. It is a title of mockery and shame than faith. Why this much hatred and mockery is connected to this place Nazareth? The biblical scholars tell us that Nazareth was despised for many reasons. First of all, Nazareth was a place of Roman army garrison and from here, the Romans ruled the poor Jews and controlled their aspirations for political liberation. Secondly Nazareth was traditionally known as a place of poor morals and thirdly the people who lived there were not religious minded. Godliness was not very much there. Because of all these reasons, Nazareth was despised very much and this helps us to understand the negative tone and harshness in Nathaniel's question.

But God chose only this low place as his place. God wanted his only son to live and grow only in this sinful and condemned place Nazareth. The sinful place became the place of the savior of the humanity. Man proposes and God disposes. Anything is possible for God because He can turn a mess into a message, a test into a testimony, a trial into a triumph, a victim into a victory. We must have intellectual honesty to accept

truth wherever it comes from. Instead if we close our mind to truth and reality, then we may not be able to know the truth anytime and we will be living only in falsehood. Let us never allow prejudice, hatred and negativity to enter into our head and heart. Let us allow the spirit of God to enter our lives and liberate us from our spiritual doubts.

V. SYMBOLISM OF NATHANAEL UNDER THE FIG TREE: what is the unlocking key to understand the mystery of Jesus' reference to the fig tree? Fig tree symbolically represents Israel as a nation. Jesus curses the fig tree when they refused to bear fruits. The fig tree was a common place for prayer, especially for young rabbinic students. Nathanael may well have been a young student. If he was specifically under a fig tree when Philip called him, chances are there that he was in prayer. It is common for Jews to search for a peaceful place to pray in. It is the oriental culture to go to quiet places for prayer and reflection. Bodhi tree according to Buddhist tradition is the specific sacred fig under which the Buddha sat when he attained Enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya in Bihar, India.

The Jewish believer was taught that 'he, who, when he prays, does not pray for the coming of the Messiah, has not prayed at all.' Thus, if Nathanael had been at prayer, chances are he was praying for the Messiah. Perhaps this is why Jesus refers to him as a true Israelite; his faith was focused on waiting for the Coming. When Jesus tells Nathanael that He saw him under the fig tree, it implies that Nathanael was prepared to meet and be with the Messiah. So Jesus said that Nathanael was a true Israelite, waiting prayerfully for the coming of the Messiah as the king of the Jews.

VI. WEDDING AT CANA: 2:1-11 The scene is a village wedding feast. In Palestine a wedding was a really notable occasion. The wedding festivities lasted far more than one day. The wedding ceremony itself took place late in the evening. After the ceremony the young couple was conducted to their new home. By that time it was dark and they were conducted through the village streets by the light of flaming torches (ten virgins carrying the lamps) and with a canopy over their heads. They were taken by as long a route as possible so that as many people as possible would have the opportunity to wish them well.

For a Jewish feast wine was essential. The Rabbis said "Without wine, there is no joy." Hospitality in the East was a sacred duty. It was not that people were drunken, but in the East wine was an essential. The shortage of wine was a terrible humiliation for the bridegroom and the bride. When the wine ran out, So the Blessed Mother came to Jesus to tell him that it was so. The phrase of Jesus, "What have I to do with thee?" was a common conversational phrase. When it was uttered angrily and sharply it did indicate

complete disagreement and reproach, but when it was spoken gently it indicated not so much reproach but misunderstanding. It means: "Don't worry; you don't quite understand what is going on; leave things to me, and I will settle them in my own way." Jesus was simply telling Mary to leave things to him, that he would have his own way of dealing with the situation. The word woman sounds to us very rough and abrupt. But it is the same word as Jesus used on the Cross to address Mary as he left her to the care of John (John 19:26). The use of the word woman takes us to Gen 3 where Eve is addressed as a woman. Here John addressed Blessed Virgin as a woman to indicate that She is a new Eve.

Why water jars? Water jars were there to provide water for the purifying ceremonies of the Jews. Water was required for two purposes. First, it was required for cleansing the feet on entry to the house. The roads were not surfaced. On a dry day the feet were covered by dust and on a wet day they were soiled with mud; and the water was used for cleansing them. Second, it was required for the handwashing. Strict Jews washed the hands before a meal and between each course. It was for this foot washing and handwashing that these great stone jars of water stood there.

VII. JESUS' CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE: Jesus cleansed the temple of the money-changers and sellers of merchandise because of His disgust at what they had made of God's house of prayer and His zeal to purify it from the abuse of ungodly men. Judea was under the rule of the Romans, and the money in current use was Roman coin. However, the Jewish law required that every man should pay a tribute to the service of the sanctuary of "half a shekel" (Exodus 30:11-16), a Jewish coin. It became, therefore, a matter of convenience to have a place where the Roman coin could be exchanged for the Jewish half shekel. The money-changers provided this convenience but would demand a small sum for the exchange. Because so many thousands of people came up to the great feasts, changing money was a very profitable business and one that resulted in fraud and oppression of the poor.

Also, according to the Law, two doves or pigeons were required to be offered in sacrifice (Leviticus 14:22; Luke 2:24). Yet it was difficult to bring them from the distant parts of Judea, so they sold doves or pigeons by charging exorbitant prices. There were other merchants selling cattle and sheep for the temple sacrifices as well. These sellers exploited the poor people who came to the temple. Because of these selling and desecrating the holy temple, Jesus was filled with righteous indignation. As He overturned the tables of the money-changers, He condemned them for having turned God's house of prayer into "a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13). As He did so, His

disciples remembered Psalm 69:9, "Zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me."

The money changers in the temple courts were similar to tax collectors in that they extorted money from their own people. They were more than ordinary businessmen. They were seeking to profit financially from the worship of God. Wherever passion and zeal are found, there will also be those who seek to profit from that zeal. Paul wrote to Timothy about such people, false teachers who found a way to make a fortune off the gospel (1 Timothy 6:5). Paul often clarified the difference between his ministry and that of false teachers by pointing out their greed. In 2 Corinthians 2:17 he wrote, "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God." Peter also warned that one way to spot a modern-day money changer is to notice his or her fascination with financial gain (2 Peter 2:3). Jesus hated the money changers' exploitation of the devout two thousand years ago, and He still hates it. We may not have shady characters collecting temple taxes outside our places of worship, but we have them invading our homes through radio and television. We are wise to remember how Jesus reacted to such selfish swindlers. With no apologies, He drove them out of His Father's house. When we identify a modern money changer, we should do the same.

Anger is a very bad emotion and an ongoing struggle in our daily lives with our family members and friends. How can we justify Jesus' anger in today's gospel? There is a difference between human anger and divine anger. Human anger is mostly connected to our likes and dislikes whereas the anger of Jesus has no personal motives. His anger is a righteous anger or holy anger against evil either in persons or in an institution or in an unjust human tradition. .

This is the only place where Jesus uses his physical force against the Jews of Jerusalem temple. Why? Jerusalem Temple was a symbol of God's presence and holiness, a symbol of God's forgiveness and a symbol of prayer for all people unfortunately the Jews completely forgot this notion of God's presence and holiness in the temple and desecrated the temple by buying, Selling, cheating the poor and exploiting the gentiles. In short, Commerce, exploitation, inequality and other evil elements were going on and all these things angered Jesus. Thus the cleansing of the temple is Jesus' way of protest to the commercialization of religion. He wanted all the non-religious activities to be stopped so that the temple becomes a place of prayer and worship for all people.

What is the message for us today? Primarily the church is the place to recognize the presence and holiness of God. Secondly It is a place of reconciliation with God, with ourselves and with one another. Thirdly it is a place of prayer to praise, adore and thank the Lord for all the graces and to pray for our needs and the needs of other people. Fourthly it is a place of equality. There is no room for Color, race, language differences here. When we have these divisive mindsets, we are like the Jews who did not allow the gentiles to worship. There should be a right motivation to come here. Once a man was asked, "What did you gain by regularly praying to God?" The man replied, "Nothing...but let me tell you what I lost: Anger, ego, greed, depression, insecurity, and fear of death." Our coming to the church should have some holy purposes. St. Paul says in the letter to Corinthians that we are the living temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we need to be aware of this thought that we are the living temples of God who lives in our body as He lives in this church.

WHY CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE COMES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN? In synoptic, Jesus is depicted as going to Jerusalem only once. The Passover Feast at which he was crucified is the only one they mention, and his only visit to Jerusalem except the visit to the Temple when he was a boy. But in John we find Jesus making frequent visits to Jerusalem. John tells us of no fewer than three Passovers--this present one, the one in John 6:4 and the one in John 11:55. In addition, according to John's story, Jesus was in Jerusalem for an unnamed feast in John 5:1; for the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7:2; John 7:10; and for the Feast of the Dedication in John 10:22. In point of fact in the other three gospels the main ministry of Jesus is in Galilee; in John Jesus is in Galilee only for brief periods (John 2:1-12; John 4:43-54; John 5:1; John 6:1-7; John 14:1-31), and his main ministry is in Jerusalem.

We must always remember that John is more interested in the truth than in the facts. He is not interested in writing a chronological biography of Jesus but supremely interested in showing Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah. It is probable that John was thinking back to the great prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. "And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight; behold he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap ... he will purify the sons of Levi ... till they present right offerings to the Lord. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years" (Malachi 3:1-4). John had these tremendous prophecies ringing in his mind. He was not interested to tell men when Jesus cleansed the Temple; he was supremely interested in telling men that Jesus did cleanse the

Temple, because that cleansing was the act of the promised Messiah of God. All the likelihood is that John put this tremendous incident here to set in the very forefront of his story the great fact that Jesus was the Messiah of God come to cleanse the worship of men and to open the door to God. It is not the date that John is interested in; the date does not matter; his great concern is to show that Jesus' actions prove him to be the promised one of God.

TIMELINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS John 14:26 - "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will remind you of all that I said to you."

27 Books and 9 Authors The New Testament contains 27 different books written by nine different authors. Every author of the New Testament was Jewish except for Luke. Three of the writers: Matthew, Peter, and John were among the 12 disciples who walked with Christ during his earthly ministry. Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would bring all things to remembrance of what Jesus said and did.

| CHRONOLOGY OF NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS AND EVENTS | |
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| Date | Historical Event |
| 4 BC | Birth of Jesus |
| 4 BC | Death of Herod the Great |
| 14 AD | Death of Augustus Caesar |
| 14 AD | Tiberius Becomes Emperor of Rome |
| 26 AD | Jesus Begins his Public Ministry |
| 29 AD | Jesus is Crucified on Passover |
| 29 AD | Jesus Rises from the Dead and Appears to Many |
| 29 AD | The Holy Spirit Comes and the Church is Born |
| 30 AD | Christianity Spreads in Jerusalem |
| 34 AD | Stephen is Stoned and Martyrdom Begins |
| 35 AD | Paul Accepts Jesus on the Road to Damascus |
| 37 AD | Caligula Becomes Emperor of Rome |
| 40 AD | Cornelius and Gentiles Accept Jesus |
| 41 AD | Claudius Becomes Emperor of Rome |
| 42 AD | Antioch Becomes the New Center for the Christians |
| 43 AD | Theudas claims to be Messiah and is executed |
| 46 AD | The book of JAMES is Written |
| 46 AD | Paul Begins his First Missionary Journey |
| 51 AD | Paul Begins his Second Missionary Journey |

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| 52 AD | The Book of 1 THESSALONIANS is Written from Corinth |
| 53 AD | The Book of 2 THESSALONIANS is Written from Corinth |
| 54 AD | Paul Begins his Third Missionary Journey |
| 54 AD | Nero Becomes Emperor of Rome |
| 56 AD | The Book OF GALATIANS is Written from Corinth |
| 57 AD | The Book of 1 CORINTHIANS is Written from Macedonia |
| 57 AD | The Book of 2 CORINTHIANS is Written from Macedonia |
| 58 AD | The Book of ROMANS is Written from Corinth |
| 58 AD | The Book of 1 PETER is Written from Babylon/Rome (?) |
| 59 AD | Paul is Imprisoned at Caesarea |
| 59 AD | The Book of PHILIPPIANS is Written from Caesarea |
| 60 AD | The Book of MATTHEW is Written from Antioch (?) |
| 60 AD | Paul Appears Before Agrippa |
| 61 AD | Paul is Imprisoned at Rome |
| 61 AD | The Book of TITUS is Written from Rome |
| 61 AD | The Book of PHILEMON is Written from Rome |
| 61 AD | The Book of MARK is Written from Rome (?) |
| 62 AD | The Book of EPHESIANS is Written from Rome |
| 62 AD | The Book of COLOSSIANS is Written from Rome |
| 62 AD | Paul is Released |
| 62 AD | The Book of 1 TIMOTHY is Written from Macedonia |
| 63 AD | The Book of HEBREWS is Written from Judea (?) |
| 64 AD | Paul is Imprisoned Again |
| 64 AD | The Great Fire of Rome (Christians are Blamed) |
| 65 AD | The Book of 2 PETER is Written from Rome |
| 65 AD | The Book of 2 TIMOTHY is Written from Rome |
| 66 AD | The Jews of Judea Revolt against Rome |
| 67 AD | The Book of ACTS is Written from Rome |
| 68 AD | Paul is Martyred at Rome |
| 69 AD | Jerusalem is Besieged by the Romans |
| 69 AD | Vespasian Becomes Emperor of Rome |
| 70 AD | Jerusalem and the Temple are Destroyed and the Jews are Deported |
| 73 AD | The Jews Commit Mass Suicide at Masada |
| 79 AD | Titus Becomes Emperor of Rome |
| 80 AD | The Book of JOHN is Written from Ephesus (?) |
| 80 AD | The Book of 1 JOHN is Written from Judea (?) |
| 80 AD | The Book of 2 JOHN is Written from Ephesus (?) |
| 80 AD | The Book of 3 JOHN is Written from Ephesus (?) |
| 89 AD | The Book of REVELATION is Written from Patmos |

Difference between John's gospel and his three letters: The Gospel of John is an account of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. It was written last, most probably with full knowledge of the other Gospels, since John, as the last Apostle to die, seems to have been largely responsible for vetting which letters and documents were accepted in the early Church as canon, and is largely concerned with emphasizing Jesus' divine nature as an answer to early Gnostic heresies. The epistles of First, Second, and Third John are just that - pastoral letters to Christian congregations, or their pastors, containing some message that he wanted to pass on to them.

JEWISH FESTIVALS IN THE BIBLE AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH JESUS' FIRST COMING IN PERSON AND HIS SECOND COMING IN GLORY

Seven Jewish Festivals: There are seven Jewish festivals or feasts outlined in the Bible. These were days appointed and ordained by God to be kept to the honor of His name. These times of celebration are important not only to Israel, but also to the overall message of the Bible, because each one foreshadows or symbolizes an aspect of the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each one of these Jewish festivals is significant both in regards to the Lord's provision for His people and in regards to the foreshadowing of the coming Messiah and His work in redeeming people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. While Christians are no longer under any obligation to observe any of the Old Testament feasts (Colossians 2:16), we should understand their significance and importance, nonetheless.

Beginning in the spring, the seven Jewish feasts are Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of First fruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jewish feasts are closely related to Israel's spring and fall harvests and agricultural seasons. They were to remind the Israelites each year of God's ongoing protection and provision. But, even more importantly, they foreshadowed the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.

Here is a brief summary of the spiritual significance of each of the seven Jewish festivals or feasts. The first four feasts are the spring feasts reminding of Jesus' first coming and the last three are the fall feasts reminding Jesus' second coming.

1. Passover reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God for our sins. Just as the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the doorpost of Jewish homes caused the Spirit of the Lord to pass over those homes during the last plague on Egypt (Ex 12), so those covered by the blood of the Lamb will escape the spiritual death and judgment God will

visit upon all who reject Him. Of all the Jewish festivals, Passover is of the greatest importance because the Lord's Supper was a Passover meal (Matt 26:17-27).

2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread followed immediately after Passover and lasted one week, during which time the Israelites ate no bread with yeast in remembrance of their haste in preparing for their exodus from Egypt. In the New Testament, yeast is often associated with evil (1 Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:9), and, just as Israel was to remove yeast from their bread, so are Christians to purge evil from their lives and live a new life in godliness and righteousness.

3. The Feast of First fruits took place at the beginning of the harvest and signified Israel's gratitude to and dependence upon God. According to Lev 23:9-14, an Israelite would bring a sheaf of the first grain of the harvest to the priest, who would wave it before the Lord as an offering. Deut 26:1-11 states that, when the Israelites brought the first fruits of their harvest before the priest, they were to acknowledge that God had delivered them from Egypt and had given them the Promised Land. This reminds us of Christ's resurrection as He was the "first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20).

4. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) occurred 50 days after the First fruits festival and celebrated the end of the grain harvest (the Greek word Pentecost means "fiftieth"). The primary focus of the festival was gratitude to God for the harvest. This feast reminds us of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to send "another helper" (John 14:16) who would indwell believers and empower them for ministry. The coming of the Holy Spirit 50 days after Jesus' resurrection was the guarantee (Eph 1:13-14) that the promise of salvation and future resurrection will come to pass.

5. The Feast of Trumpets was a "day of trumpet blast" (Num 29:1) to commemorate the end of the agricultural and festival year. The trumpet blasts were meant to signal to Israel that they were entering a sacred season. The Feast of Trumpets signifies Christ's second coming. We see trumpets associated with the second coming in verses like 1 Thes 4:16, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first."

6. The Day of Atonement occurs just ten days after the Feast of Trumpets. The Day of Atonement was the day the high priest went into the Holy of Holies each year to make an offering for the sins of Israel. This feast is symbolic of the time when God will again turn His attention back to the nation of Israel after "the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and . . . all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:25-26).

7. The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) is the seventh and final feast of the Lord and took place five days after the Day of Atonement. For seven days, the Israelites presented offerings to the Lord, during which time they lived in huts made from palm branches. Living in the booths recalled the sojourn of the Israelites prior to their taking the land of Canaan (Leviticus 23:43). This feast signifies the future time when Christ rules and reigns on earth. For the rest of eternity, people from every tribe, tongue, and nation will “tabernacle” or dwell with Christ in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:9–27).

While the four spring feasts look back at what Christ accomplished at His first coming, the three fall feasts point us toward the glory of His second coming. Understanding the significance of these God-appointed Jewish festivals helps us to better see and understand the complete picture and plan of redemption found in Scripture.