

## Welcome to BNEXT

I am excited to share this journey through God's Word with you. As we study Scripture, we see an unfolding revelation of who God is, the nature of Jesus, and how we can become stronger in our walk with Christ. It is important that we study Scripture for ourselves — allowing the Holy Spirit to enlighten us (Acts 17:11).

The Scripture covered by each lesson is listed on the top-right side of the masthead of the page. Read the Scripture passages and then begin working your way through the lesson. Each lesson in this series contains three pages of commentary, followed by three pages of questions that will assist you to dig deeper and reflect on God's Word.

We have also included a Leader's Guide that will enable anyone to facilitate a small group. Once you have completed this BNEXT study, I hope you will consider leading others through this material — whether it is a group of friends, your church, or as a ministry outreach. (See the Leader's Guide at the end of this study for more information.)

Again, thank you for allowing me to share this amazing journey with you.

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

Handwritten signature of William P. Campbell in blue ink.

**William P. Campbell**

Founder & President | Scripture Awakening

## BNEXT Participant's Guide

Thank you for choosing BNEXT Bible study curriculum. To help you get the most out of your study, please take a few minutes to read this information before you begin. Studying the Bible is much like going on a journey — it takes us to new places in our understanding and our walk with God. The Word of God is transformative — it's living and active, can build up our faith, and call us to move beyond where we are.

Using this curriculum, you may journey alone, or travel with others in a small group, or even engage as an entire congregation (with small groups as part of the program). Groups gather once a week to review what was read, to share answers to discussion questions, and to deepen their understanding.

## About This Study

This electronic version of the Participant's Guide contains the same material as the printed version. It allows you to electronically record your answers to the questions which are part of each lesson. Following each question, you will find a blue text box. Click or touch the box and the field within it will turn white allowing you to type in your answer. Your answer will automatically be saved when you exit the text box. Should you need more space for your answer, the text box will automatically expand and insert a scroll bar on the right-hand side.

## Things to Know

These studies are designed to be used in many different settings— individuals, congregations (separating into small groups), Sunday school classes, prison ministries, military, business groups— virtually anywhere a small group can be formed. Experience has shown that participants find the small group experience to be greatly beneficial. The input and interaction with others will broaden your perspective and stimulate your thinking about Scripture.

The lessons are designed to be done throughout the week. Each lesson contains a few pages of commentary, followed by study questions. There are three types of questions: Devotion (Personal Questions), Discussion (Small Group), and Digging Deeper (Further Study). While participants may use any Bible translation they prefer, all of the Biblical quotations in BNEXT studies are from the New International Version (NIV).

Plan your daily reading. The Scripture readings are located on the right side of the masthead of each lesson. Some lessons may cover a few chapters of a book (such as Genesis 1-11 in the series, *In the Beginning*). Longer readings may be broken down into more manageable daily readings, which may take some thoughtful planning. Some readings are as short as a few verses and will not present any difficulties. Some topical studies do not have assigned Scripture readings.

If you are meeting in a small group, be sure to first read and complete the lesson before the gathering. Once a week, your group will meet to spend time (about an hour) discussing the lesson and sharing personal insights.

More of our resources and study aids can be found at [ScriptureAwakening.com](http://ScriptureAwakening.com). Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or comments at [info@scriptureawakening.com](mailto:info@scriptureawakening.com).



“It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.” Then the people bowed down and worshiped.

Exodus 12:27

### Introduction

One evening, a man and his wife went to a wealthy couple's home for dinner. After they had eaten, the hosts left the room to get dessert. As the visitors admired the sparkling crystal chandelier, the wife said, “Someday, we'll be rich.” Her husband gently took her hand and said, “We are rich. We just don't have a lot of money.”

We are incredibly rich in Christ, but do we fully understand why this is true? If not, perhaps we need to go back to our foundations.

Most New Testament truth is best understood with Old Testament insight. Someone has said, “The Old Testament is a commentary for the New.” Consider Israel's feasts, for example. A survey of the feasts of Israel can set before our eyes the dazzling purposes and promises of the Lord, like so many precious gems in the treasure house of Scriptural history.

Get prepared for an exciting journey as we focus on the festivals and feasts of the Old Testament. In this lesson, we will look at the first two—Passover and Unleavened Bread.

### Feasts and Festivals

In the Hebrew mind, the feasts and festivals were, above all, appointments to honor and celebrate God. He set appointments in the busy regimen of His people's lives—appointments they would be expected to keep. These special feasts would be a bit like our holidays. But they were more, in that they were *holy days*, from which the term “holiday” originated. They were days to be set aside for personal refreshment and restoration through spiritual focus on the person and purpose of God.

The book of Leviticus focuses on the holiness of God and His mercy toward people. Of its 27 chapters, two tell us specifically about the Jewish calendar. In Leviticus 23, we find seven key feasts. In Leviticus 25, there is a description of the Sabbath year and the year of Jubilee, the central hub around which the feasts rotated annually. Just as the hub of a well-balanced wheel appears motionless as the spokes whirl around its circumference, so the Sabbath and Jubilee provided a center of rest in the bustle of Jewish religious life.

The Israelites were instructed to allow the land to observe a Sabbath to the LORD, once they had entered the Promised Land. Therefore, every seventh year they let their fields lie fallow (unseeded). This practice would require the Israelites to place their faith in God to provide enough food during the six years to carry them through the Sabbath year. It also kept them mindful that the land ultimately belonged to the LORD. During this seventh year, the whole nation participated in extensive study of God's Word.

The Israelites were also given extensive instruction concerning the Year of Jubilee, which occurred every 50 years. Leviticus 25:8-55 tells what was to happen during this year. Land that had been leased was to be returned to the original owner, and Israelites who had sold themselves into servitude, were to be freed. The rules concerning such servitude were extensive because God made it clear that “the Israelites belong to me as servants” (Leviticus 25:55).

Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1 Corinthians 5:7,8

This study will focus on the feasts and festivals established by God in Leviticus 23. Most New Testament scholars agree that each of these appointed times for celebration foreshadow the mission and ministry of Christ. Some relate to the work already accomplished by our Lord, and others relate to the blessings of our Lord that are yet to come.

### **Passover and Unleavened Bread**

Christianity and Judaism fit together perfectly as one story of God's unfolding plan. Their histories are inseparable like a tree and its fruit; like bees and honey; like a sunrise and a sunset. You can't have one without the other.

Nowhere is this more graphically portrayed than in the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread found in the Old Testament and the Christian parallel of the Lord's supper found in the New Testament.

The Jewish prophetic calendar opens with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which were originally considered two distinct but overlapping events as described in Leviticus 23:4-6. Passover began on the 14th day of the month of Nisan, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread ran from the 15th to the 21st day of the same month. Over time they were referred to as one and the same feast, which is how they are celebrated today.

**Passover** celebrates God's bringing the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt. The blood of a spotless lamb was put on the tops and sides of doorframes so that God's people would be spared from the destroying angel's wrath (Exodus 12:22-23). The blood of Christ, our spotless lamb, was shed on the frame of a Roman cross to spare us from God's holy wrath (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Jews celebrate Passover with the Seder meal (*Seder* means "order of service, ritual meal"). This is accompanied by the reading of the *Haggadah*, a text that tells the story of the deliverance from Egypt. Christians celebrate deliverance from death to life, not through the blood of an earthly lamb, but through the blood of Jesus, our Passover Lamb. The parallels between the old and the new cannot be overlooked.

In his book, *Rabboni*, Phillip Keller writes, "Significantly, the symbolism of God's Lamb lingers until the present day. When an international banquet is served at the United Nations, the only meat dish, which can be freely partaken of by all, is lamb. It is no accident our Lord was called God's Lamb." The symbolism of the Passover meal is indeed rich.

**Unleavened Bread** was eaten for seven days, starting with the Passover meal, to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt when God's people had no time to allow their bread to rise. Over time leaven (yeast) became a symbol for sin (Luke 12:1). Unleavened bread represented a life without sin.

As Christ shared His last Passover meal with His disciples, He broke the unleavened bread and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). His was the truly sinless life. He is the Bread of Life.



For My flesh is true food,  
and My blood is true drink.

John 6:55

A high point of the Seder meal, even today, is the breaking and sharing of the *aphikomen*— a special piece of unleavened bread, which beautifully typifies Christ. It is the last thing eaten at the Passover meal. Part of the bread is wrapped in a napkin reminding us of the burial of Christ. The remaining part of the *aphikomen* is hidden. Later in the meal, this hidden portion is sought out and discovered by children, and brought joyously into public view—a striking picture of Christ's public view after His victorious resurrection.

How exciting it is to become aware of the connection between the Jewish celebration of Passover (Christ concealed) and the Christian celebration of Passover, i.e., the Lord's Supper (Christ revealed). As Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, we focus on the sacrifice Jesus made for us when He went to the cross. Through Him we receive forgiveness for our sins that we may truly rejoice in God's love and saving grace.

"We may not have a lot of money" but we ARE truly rich. As Believers we have...

- the perfect Passover Lamb...
- the sinless Bread of Life...and
- the resurrected Christ! Hallelujah and Amen!!!

### Spending Time With God

This five-week series, entitled "Celebrating God," is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God for special insight into His Word.



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 1

The Passover & Unleavened Bread | Exodus 12

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Read the commentary portion of this study guide. Write down one insight related to the Jewish feasts or holy days about which you are especially thankful to God.

2. Read Exodus 12:1-5. What were the requirements for the Passover Lamb?

3. See Deuteronomy 15:21. Why do you think God required healthy and unblemished animals for sacrifice?

4. How is Christ the fulfillment of the Passover (1 Peter 1:18-19 and Hebrews 9:12-14)?

5. Prayerfully read all of Isaiah 53. Note especially verse 7. As you reflect upon God's perfect plan for a perfect salvation through our perfect Lamb, describe which verse spoke to you the most and why.

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

6. Turn to Exodus 12:6-7. Imagine and discuss what it would be like today to apply generous amounts of animal blood on the doorframes of your house.

7. Why did God require such a graphic and bloody demonstration? What does the blood represent? If you can, support your answer with Scripture.

Jews were told to first celebrate the Passover, and then for the whole week following, eat unleavened bread. To the Hebrew mind, seven days represents completion and eternity.



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 1

The Passover & Unleavened Bread | Exodus 12

8. Compare Exodus 12:14-16 with 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 and Matthew 16:8-12. What does leaven (yeast) usually symbolize in Scripture?

9. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread find their New Testament parallel in the Lord's Supper.

According to scripture, should communion hold an important place in a Christian's life? Why?

The ancient Hebrews used the sourdough method of making bread. Discuss your experiences with yeast and with bread making. See how far you can draw out the analogy of yeast and its applications to our lives. Give examples in today's world, perhaps even in your personal world, regarding how sin is like leaven.

How do you normally prepare your heart to receive the Lord's Supper?

Discuss this statement, using Scripture, as you are able: "I know that God forgives my past sins, but why doesn't He also give me the ability not to sin in the present? I feel defeated. Am I weird? What hope is there for me?"

How does this study give you a new appreciation for receiving Communion?



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 1

The Passover & Unleavened Bread | Exodus 12

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

10. Read Exodus 12:8-10. Fire represents judgment. In verse 10, all of the leftovers were to be burned. What are the implications here about the judgment Christ bore for us as the sacrificial Lamb?

Can you think of an area in your life today where you need to do something now (or to be prepared to move quickly) in obedience to God?

11. Read Exodus 12:31-39.

Why did the people need to eat the Passover in haste?

“Yet though, the work of Christ is finished for the sinner, it is not yet finished IN the sinner.”

— Donald G. Bloesch

12. Is it possible for us to live a perfectly sinless life (See 1 John 1:8-10)? What is God’s solution for our sin (1 John 2:1-2)?

While the saying “haste makes waste” is a good principle to live by, why is the opposite true when God tells us to avoid sin?

### Scripture for Meditation

But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:5



Speak to the Israelites and say to them: “When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.”

Leviticus 23:10-11

### Introduction

We should take the appointed feasts and festivals of Israel seriously. God did. Jesus never missed an appointment. In our last lesson, we saw that our Lord died on the day of Passover, offering Himself as the Passover Lamb. The day of His death was foreordained. The timing was also held in His Father’s hand. He was placed on the cross on the “third hour” (9 AM) and taken down at 3 PM. This left enough time to wrap His body and place it in a sealed tomb before sundown, just in time for the next Feast—the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In preparation for this second feast, the Jewish people cleaned out and locked up every bit of leaven from their homes, symbolizing the need for the removal of sin from their lives. This feast was fulfilled as the broken body of a sinless Christ was placed in the tomb. He dealt with our sins once and for all. Let us now consider the feasts of Firstfruits and Weeks, noticing how Jesus kept divine appointments through them as well.

### The Feast of Firstfruits

The prescription for this third great feast was given in Leviticus 23:10-11: “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.’”

The firstfruits of the spring harvest were to be brought to the Lord on the Sunday following Unleavened Bread. Christians call this day “Easter,” a word derived from the Babylonian goddess of fertility, Ishtar. By changing the name *Firstfruits* to Easter people diminished the emphasis on Christ, who is Himself the firstfruits. “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

Consider the beauty of the term firstfruits. If there are firstfruits, there will be second fruits, and third, and fourth, and many more. Because Christ kept this feast and rose again from the dead, there will be more fruits of the resurrection to come. To emphasize this point, God caused many of the saints to come “out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people” (Matthew 27:53). Ultimately, “the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

### The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

The Feast of Weeks was also called the Feast of Harvest because it occurred during the time of the summer harvest, the second harvest of the year. The crop yield would be much greater during the summer than it was during the spring (Firstfruits).

This one feast was later given the additional name Pentecost. *Pentecost* is a Greek word, which means “fiftieth day.” In Leviticus 23:16, the Israelites were instructed, “Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord.”

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:4-5

Pentecost occurred on a Sabbath, exactly fifty days following firstfruits. The counting of these fifty days was a very special time for God's people. As they prepared for the summer harvest, they acknowledged that it was God who brought forth the fruits of the land. It would be a time of prayer, reflection, and rededication.

One cannot help but wonder what was on the minds of the disciples of Jesus as they waited during the 50 days after Firstfruits (Easter) when Christ had risen. Did they understand the significance of the Pentecost to come and the coming of the Holy Spirit? Christ fulfilled divine appointments on Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits, through His death, burial, and resurrection. So now what?

This same Lord told them: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

Traditionally, the Jews celebrated Pentecost as the time the Law was given and the Covenant was enacted, giving birth to the Jewish nation. Ultimately, Pentecost became the very day the Holy Spirit was given and the New Covenant enacted, giving birth to the Church (Acts 2). On the day of Pentecost, after Peter delivered an anointed and powerful sermon, there was a harvest of about 3,000 people for the Kingdom of God (Acts 2:41)—quite a contrast to the 3,000 who perished after the giving of the Law (Exodus 32:28).

God reminds us in Jeremiah 31:31, 33, “‘The time is coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.’” The Holy Spirit had been with them before, but now He would be in them. God first etched the Law on stone tablets, and now He writes His will on the human heart.

The Old and New Covenants are inseparable. How interesting then that instructions for the Feast of Pentecost guided the people to bring as an offering two loaves of leavened bread, of equal weight (Leviticus 23:17). This bread was leavened—signifying sinful humanity in need of redemption. There were two loaves, signifying the two parts of the Church. The Church would be comprised of both Jew and Gentile, for “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).

### Summary

Do you have Jewish friends or family who reject Jesus' claim to be the Messiah? Ask them if they realize that Jesus never missed a feast. He fulfilled the feasts.

No mere man could orchestrate the details and exact timing to cause an angry crowd to break through religious and political red tape to accomplish His murder. No prophet was so good that He could arrange the timing of His own burial when His body was under control of a hostile government. Only God could fulfill Pentecost by sending His wonderful Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to appear in power at just the right time. Only God's Son could fulfill the four festivals we have studied thus far. And it is He who will fulfill three more appointments connected with the end of the Age.



For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

1 Corinthians 15:3,4

There can be no greater proof to an open and inquiring mind that Jesus is the Messiah, as foretold by the Law and the prophets, than His fulfillment of the feasts and festivals of Israel.

### **Spending Time With God**

This five-week series, entitled “Celebrating God,” is designed to supplement your personal and small group Bible study. The devotion questions are written for your personal study. The discussion questions are especially for small groups. Members who answer the questions ahead of time can bring more insight into their small group meeting. The digging deeper questions are for those who wish for more personal or small group study. As you spend time with God, may His Word enrich your life and enhance your daily walk with Him. Pray, asking God for special insight into His Word.



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 2

Firstfruits & Feast of Weeks | Leviticus 23:10-11

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. From the commentary portion of this study guide, find and write down one insight related to the Jewish feasts or holy days about which you are especially thankful to God. Take a moment to give God thanks, and also ask for His guidance as you continue this study.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. What reasons does Paul give for the importance of the resurrection of Christ?

3. From 1 Corinthians 15:20, why do you think Paul describes death as sleep? Do you think of loved ones you have lost as asleep?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-28. Pray through these verses, thanking God that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Firstfruits.

5. From 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, how should our knowledge of the resurrection effect our lives today?

6. See Daniel 12:2-3. Make a list of some of the people you fear are not prepared for the resurrection to come. Take time to pray for them, asking God to work in their lives that they might become part of the great harvest of righteousness.

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

7. Compare Leviticus 23:10 with 2 Corinthians 9. The Feast of Firstfruits is foundational to the Biblical concept of tithing (giving 1/10th to God). Tell your viewpoint on tithing, for example: should we tithe? Why or why not? How should we tithe? Be specific.



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 2

Firstfruits & Feast of Weeks | Leviticus 23:10-11

8. From Acts 2, why do you think God gave His Spirit in such a dramatic fashion?

11. Describe one of your most memorable encounters with the Holy Spirit.

9. Did the Holy Spirit work in the lives of God's people in the Old Testament? What was the difference after the day of Pentecost?

12. How can we distinguish the Holy Spirit from deceiving Spirits (1 Corinthians 12:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3)?

10. See Acts 1:12-14. The believers were waiting for the promise of Christ, for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). Do we, as believers need to wait on God for more of the same Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

13. Do you think the Church puts too much emphasis on the Holy Spirit, or not enough? Why?



### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

14. From John 14–16, or from other Scriptures, what are the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit of God?

15. See 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 12-13. It is clearly God's plan, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, to unite believers. Yet the very topic of the Holy Spirit too often divides us. Why? What can we do about this problem? Is there no solution?

16. Galatians 5:22-26 tells us to live a victorious spiritual life. Write down areas in which you need God's help to do this. Take a few minutes to pray for one another.

### God's Calendar of Festivals

In this series we generally use the words feasts and festivals interchangeably. Some of the appointed religious celebrations in the chart below are feasts (celebrations around food), but all of them can generally be referred to as festivals (celebrations of worship to God, including special days like Atonement).

Celebration	Jewish (Lunar) Calendar	Our (Solar) Calendar
Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits	1st month Nisan	Mar–Apr
Pentecost (Feast of Weeks or Shavuot)	3rd month Sivan	May–Jun
Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles or Booths (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkor)	7th month Ethanim Tishri	Sep–Oct
Hanukkah (Dedication) Festival of Lights from the Maccabean Revolt 165 BC	9th month Kisleev	Nov–Dec

#### Scripture for Meditation

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when He comes, those who belong to Him.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23



The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Do no regular work, but present a food offering to the LORD.’”

Leviticus 23:23-25

### Introduction

The feasts studied thus far: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and Pentecost, all occurred during the spring. The remaining feasts: Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles, fell during the fall. The spring feasts represent that which has been fulfilled in Christ when He came as a servant. The fall feasts prophetically portray the work Christ has yet to do when He returns as King.

The number seven often carries special significance in Scripture—it represents completion and eternity. (God created everything in six days and on the seventh day He rested.) The seventh month of the year, *Tishri* (Sept/Oct), was the most sacred month for God’s people. The fall feasts occurred in this month.

The seventh month was to the year what Sabbath was to the week—a time to rest, reflect, repent, and get right with God. It began with the sounding of trumpets, announcing a time of preparation. It was as if the loud notes of the horns said to the people, “Wake up from your sleep! Let the light of God shine upon you.” Over time this first day of the month became the New Year Festival, Rosh Hashanah. The following ten days were a time for heart-searching and life-style adjustments, which led up to the most solemn day of the year, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Five days later came the most jubilant of all feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles.

### The Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah)

Trumpets were used on various occasions to call God’s people together, whether for war, civic gatherings, or a celebration. On the first day of each lunar month, trumpets sounded to call the people to feast and rest. Of the new moon festivals, the Feast of Trumpets was most important. Here the blowing of trumpets was most pronounced. In Jesus’ day, trumpets and horns were blown in Jerusalem from morning until evening during this special day.

These were not the priest’s silver trumpets but the horns of animals. The blast would sound from the horns of rams, lambs, or any kind of animal, except oxen and calves. According to the rabbis, oxen and calves drew attention to the Israelites’ blasphemous sin at the foot of Mt. Sinai as they worshipped the golden calf. The ram’s horn trumpet, or *Shofar*, is called the Trumpet of the Lord in remembrance of the ram that Abraham sacrificed instead of Isaac. These horns were also used to announce to the Hebrew people the fall of their enemies, giving them the liberty they needed to worship God. even today, liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty we have in our own United States of America. Inscribed on our Liberty Bell is this statement: “Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof” (Leviticus. 25:10 KJV). God has truly blessed us!

During the Feast of Trumpets, the blast of the horn was a call to repentance. People were coming to meet their God. One day, there will be a trumpet blown from above when we will be gathered to meet our God. “For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

Hebrews 7:26-28

### The Day of Atonement (Yom [day] Kippur [to atone])

Following the Feast of Trumpets would be a ten-day period of reflection. Modern Jews often refer to the ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement as “the Days of Awe.” “The word *atonement* comes from the Hebrew word *Kippur*, which means, “to cover, appease, pardon, cleanse.” Once a year, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle (later the Temple) and sprinkle blood from a sacrificial animal on the mercy seat—the golden covering over the Ark of the Covenant. Forgiveness of sins for the entire nation was made through the death of this one, tiny, unblemished lamb. His blood signified the blood of the awaited Messiah, the Christ, the perfect sacrifice.

Preparation to offer this sacrifice was a drawn-out process, emphasizing the great importance of the sacrifice. Initially, the high priest had to carefully prepare himself for this solemn offering. For seven days, he was assisted by over 500 other priests performing exacting and meticulous washings, sacrifices, and rituals. All of this was to make him acceptable for the day when he would enter the Holy of Holies. On the Day of Atonement, he washed his body five times, his hands and feet ten times, changed his clothes, and observed countless other regulations.

The effort the high priest needed to expend to become clean and holy enough to enter the Holy of Holies is a stark reminder to us that God had a better plan. Jesus Christ is our High Priest—clean and spotless and pure (Hebrews 7:26-28).

Three animals were sacrificed: a bull for the sins of the priest, a goat for the sins of the people, and another goat, called the “scapegoat.” Lots were drawn and it fell on one of these goats to become the scapegoat (the origination of a term we still use today).

The high priest laid his blood-stained hands (from the first goat) on the head of the scapegoat and sent it to die in the wilderness, symbolically carrying away the people's sins. The scapegoat would turn toward the people and stand facing them; waiting, as it were, until their sins would be laid on him. The two goats symbolized the two aspects of the work Christ completed on the cross.

The first goat represented the need for someone to die for our sins, and the second one represented the one who would carry our sins away. Only Christ could fulfill both obligations. He would bear in His own body the sins of the whole human race. As our scapegoat, Christ was brought into public view by Pilate and stood before the people before being led forth to carry away our sins.

### Summary

Orthodox Jews continue to blow trumpets on the first of *Tishri*. They refocus their lives during the Ten Days of Awe. But today on the Day of Atonement, there is no temple, there is no high priest, and there is no sacrifice to offer for their sins. Rabbis have found substitutes, the most important of which are repentance, prayer, and charity. Year by year the deep need for atonement is felt, but year by year there is no satisfaction.

The writer of Hebrews tells us unequivocally that the blood of goats and lambs could never

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.

Hebrews 10:1a

take away sin. “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves.” (Hebrews 10:1).

“The law is only a shadow....” A story is told of an experienced diver who decided to go for a mid-night swim in the team's training pool. He climbed the many steps to the high dive, positioned himself on the edge of the board, spread his arms in a horizontal position in anticipation of a swan dive—but froze. Behind him was a brilliant full moon. The moon was so bright that it cast a shadow of the cross over the pool. The diver looked at the cross, and then hesitatingly, backed down off the board and went to the edge of the pool. He reached down at the pool's edge to touch the water and found the pool was empty. It had been drained for the night! Had he dived as planned, he would have been killed instantly. The “shadow of the cross” saved his life!

The same is true for each of us today. Only as we rest in the shadow of Calvary's cross will we receive eternal life. One day a trumpet will sound from the heavenlies. As Christ appears, many will recognize the atoning sacrifice, which has been offered for all who believe for all time (Zechariah 12:10). This may be a shock for many Christians, as well. Do you personally believe that Christ has completely and fully atoned for your sins? Are you resting in the shadow of the cross?

### Spending Time With God

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SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 3

Trumpets & Atonement | Leviticus 23:23-25

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. From the commentary part of this study guide, write down one insight related to the Feast of Trumpets or the Day of Atonement about which you are especially thankful to God. As you give God thanks, also ask for His guidance as you continue this study.

2. Read Hebrews 10:1-4. Why do you think God commanded the Israelites to establish such an elaborate system of sacrifice if it actually had no real ability to take away sins?

3. From Hebrews 10:5-10, what do we learn about the sacrifice of Christ?

4. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. Now that the perfect Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, has been offered, what ought to be the results in our lives? List each result and take a moment to reflect on whether these important truths have permeated your life.

5. See Hebrews 10:26-31.

Why do you think the author of Hebrews gave such strict warnings?

What do these cautions say about willful, blatant, unrepentant sin on the part of a Christian?



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CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 3

Trumpets & Atonement | Leviticus 23:23-25

6. Now read Hebrews 10:32-39. How should we respond to the holiness of God? Take a few minutes to prayerfully read Isaiah 6:1-8. Note the progression here, and ask the Spirit of God to lead your heart through the same experience of the holiness of God.

Why is forgiveness essential?

9. Contrast the world's view of sin and the Christian's view of sin.

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

7. The Jews prepared themselves during the "Ten Days of Awe," for the Day of Atonement. In a short phrase, what does the word "atonement" mean? (If needed, use a Bible dictionary).

10. Because our sins are completely atoned for, why should we worry about whether we live sinful lives?

8. Considering the forgiving grace of our Lord,

Have you exercised forgiveness freely to those who have sinned against you?

11. Write a short note to Jesus in thankfulness for His amazing and forgiving grace:

Why is forgiveness so difficult?



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CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 3

Trumpets & Atonement | Leviticus 23:23-25

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

12. Read Matthew 24:36-41. Do you ever contemplate the idea of the “rapture” (a capturing up to heaven of believers)? If not, to what does this text refer?

If so what do you think it will be like?

13. From Matthew 24:42-51, how can we best prepare for the Lord's return?

14. Do you think there will be a literal blowing of a trumpet when Christ comes back (1 Corinthians 15:52)? Why the trumpet and what does it symbolize?

15. The Jews prepared themselves during the “Ten Days of Awe,” for the Day of Atonement. Many see this as a picture of the time of judgment people will face when they meet God (See 2 Corinthians 5:10).

What kind of judgment will Christians face?

What would our lives be like if we took these truths seriously?

How did these truths affect Paul's life (2 Corinthians 5:11-21)?

#### Scripture for Meditation

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

2 Corinthians 5:10



The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present food offerings to the LORD, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the LORD.

Leviticus 23:33-36

### Introduction

An aspiring young executive was being interviewed for a position with a large company. The president of the company had wined and dined this young man. They talked about football, family, world issues, whatever, just to keep the conversation light and relaxed. Then when the president felt as if the young man was completely off guard, he leaned across the table and asked in a very abrupt tone, “And what is your purpose in life?” Other applicants who had been interviewed had become disconcerted and flustered but without a moment’s hesitation this young man looked the president square in the eye and said, “Sir, my purpose in life is to go to heaven and to take as many people with me as I can.” For the first time the president was speechless.

As we come to the final feasts, perhaps we might ask ourselves, “Is there a purpose for all these Feasts?” The answer is a resounding, “Yes!” We have seen a wonderful progression and purpose of the feasts as they began in the spring with:

**Passover:** for the *Hebrew*, a reminder of the death angel “passing over” as they were about to exit Egypt.

**Passover:** for the *Christian*, Jesus became our Passover Lamb.

**Unleavened Bread:** for the *Hebrew*, leaven represented sin, therefore no yeast was in the bread.

**Unleavened Bread:** for the *Christian*, Jesus is the Bread of Life in whom there is no sin.

**Firstfruits:** for the *Hebrews*, the “firstfruit” of the spring, representing God’s provision.

**Firstfruits:** for the *Christian*, Easter. Jesus is the firstfruit of those who sleep. He is ALIVE.

**Pentecost:** for the *Hebrew*, 50 days after Firstfruits; a time of prayer, reflection and rededication to Yahweh as the father of the Jewish nation. A reminder of God’s Covenant.

**Pentecost:** for the *Christian*, 50 days after the Resurrection; the birth of the Church; the Holy Spirit given.

The last three feasts took place during the fall:

**Trumpets:** for the *Hebrew*, trumpets were sounded and the people were reminded to “get ready”—the Day of Atonement was coming in 10 days.

**Trumpets:** for the *Christian*, that bright and glorious day when Jesus will return and the trumpet shall sound.

**Atonement:** for the *Hebrew*, the holiest and most sacred of days, a time of pleading for forgiveness.

**Atonement:** for the *Christian*, that day when we will stand before our Lord, forgiven.

**Tabernacles:** for the *Hebrew*, a celebration of God’s provision in booths (tents) as they wandered

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

John 7:37,38

in the desert on their way to the Promised Land.

**Tabernacles:** for the *Christian*, a celebration of the Messiah's heavenly kingdom that awaits all those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Let's take a look at the Feast of Tabernacles.

### The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyful of all the celebrations appointed by God for His people, Israel. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD'S Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work'" (Leviticus 23:33-36).

Just as Passover/Unleavened Bread came on the fifteenth day of the first month, this great Feast of Tabernacles would fall on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The incredible truths about the person and purpose of our Lord find their beginning in Passover and their fulfillment in Tabernacles. Like a doorway connecting heaven to earth, our Lord offered Himself as the Passover lamb. He, who knew no sin, became sin on our behalf as represented by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He rose on Firstfruits that we might be given new life. He poured out the promised Holy Spirit on Pentecost, giving us strength and grace to live for Him on earth, as we await His coming with the blast of a trumpet. The Feast of Trumpets ushers in Atonement, which brings to mind the awesome day of our meeting the Lord face to face. On that day, not only will our sins be covered but also our sin nature and all influences to sin will be banished! We will have entered the Lord's presence with all the saints, and the joy and celebration that follows will be truly "filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8).

To celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, God's people constructed tents (booths) of palm branches, leafy trees, and willows. They lived in these tents for seven days (the number of completion and eternity), celebrating and praising God (Leviticus 23:40-42). The tents reminded God's people of their ancestors' journey through the desert on their way to the Promised Land. In comparison to Egypt's house of bondage, dwelling in tents in itself created an image of freedom and happiness. These same tents should remind us of the heavenly dwelling that awaits all who believe.

Place yourself in the midst of this great holy day celebration. People poured into Jerusalem from nations everywhere as they had previously done on Passover and Pentecost. They brought gifts for God. The rich brought goods by the wagon-load. The poor carried theirs in wicker baskets. One can almost imagine their voices singing, "Let us go to the house of the LORD. Our feet are standing in your gates, O Jerusalem" (Psalm 122:1-2).

During one of these celebrations, as the people gathered to meet God, they would be in for a shock (John 7). Christ would claim to be God, the long awaited Messiah. Our Lord would make the audacious claim that to rightly celebrate this feast, they would need to trust in Him. The

His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose that He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Ephesians 3:10-12

Lord made His appearance during a “sacred assembly.”

### The Sacred Assemblies

The great Feast of Tabernacles began and ended with a “sacred assembly” (Leviticus 33-36), worshipping and giving thanks to God. There was nothing new about the concept. Such holy gatherings were integral to the whole religious calendar as described in Leviticus 23, from Passover (Leviticus 23:7-8) and Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:20) in the spring, through Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24) and Atonement (Leviticus 23:27) in the fall. They were not only part and parcel with the Feasts (Leviticus 23:4) but the weekly practice of the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3). There was no sacred assembly to match that which closed the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews called this day the “Great Hoshana.” On this day, people gathered their palm branches and waved them and beat them on the floor of the synagogue, chanting, “The voice announcing the coming of the Messiah is heard.” How true this would be!

Probably the most joyous event on that great closing day of the Feast was the pouring of water near the altar. Abundant water was the lifeblood of a bountiful harvest and God was recognized as the source of this water. Priests brought water in a golden flask from the fountain of Siloam and poured it as a libation into the basin near the altar. “Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink...’” (John 7:37).

### Summary

In the midst of the last great assembly of the Feast of Tabernacles, the people waved their palms and our Lord claimed to be the source of living water (John 7). At the greatest assembly of all time—when all of God’s people are gathered in the heavenlies—they will again carry palms (Revelation 7:9-10). Yes, with them, we will hear God say, “Now the dwelling (tabernacle) of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...” (Revelation 21:3).

When at times we wonder, “What is God’s ultimate plan for our lives?”, we can think of the Feast of Tabernacles for it shows God’s great promise to meet us in heaven—and to bring to Himself all who will call on Him! And we wondered if God had a purpose!

### Spending Time With God

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SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 4

Tabernacles & Sacred Assemblies | Leviticus 23:33-43

### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. Respond to one particular insight that spoke to you from the commentary on the Feast of Tabernacles.

As the Israelites were to gather in booths and focus on God alone (Leviticus 23:42-43), so are we called to set time aside each day to celebrate Jesus and bring our cares to Him.

2. Read Psalm 1. When are we to meditate upon God's word? Do you think this is practical or even possible today? Explain.

3. Read Luke 6:12. How long did Jesus pray? Has there ever been an occasion where you prayed all night?

4. Imagine trying to praise God for a week in a small booth. How do you think the Jews did it?

We can be sure they relied heavily on the Psalms as their guidebook to praise.

5. Choose a favorite Psalm (perhaps Psalm 103). Read it, line by line, and from the text move into praises. Seek to spend at least five minutes praising God with the help of the Psalms and without distraction or interruption. Could you do it? Was it easy or difficult? Explain.

6a. How would you rate your daily time alone with the Lord on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being poor and 10 being fantastic? What kind of daily devotional time do you desire?



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CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 4

Tabernacles & Sacred Assemblies | Leviticus 23:33-43

6b. What are things we do that get in our way and prevents us from spending the time alone with the Lord?

10. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16, Paul exhorts us to “Be joyful always.” Do you think he really meant always? Why or why not?

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

7. A person's consistent, private devotional life has direct correlation with their success and joy in the daily activities of public life. How does this statement strike you?

11. Do circumstances determine our joy? Someone has said that the circumstances of life don't *determine* the way we are but *reveal* the way we are. What does that mean to you?

8. How can a busy mom, dad, grandparent, student or working person find a desirable time to be alone with God?

12. 1 John 3:2 tells us that when Jesus appears “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is! “ Are you looking forward to that “great gettin’ up morning”? Describe what you think it's going to be like when you see Jesus face to face.

9. Share one simple practice or one significant truth that has been helpful in developing or maintaining an effective devotional time in your life.

13. Would your devotional time be any different today if you knew for certain that the Lord Jesus was returning tomorrow at 2:12 PM? How?



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 4

Tabernacles & Sacred Assemblies | Leviticus 23:33-43

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

14. Read the following Scriptures and record what heaven will be like.

2 Corinthians 5:1-5

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

1 John 3:3

2 Corinthians 12:1-4

Revelation 22:10-12

1 John 3:2

17. Take a few minutes to pray that the promise of the eternal sacred assembly that awaits us in heaven will provide each of us more impetus to live for and to celebrate Jesus while we're still on this earth.

Revelation 21:1-4

15. Notice the larger context of the same readings and discuss how a right view of heaven should affect the way we live on earth.

2 Corinthians 5:6-11

#### Scripture for Meditation

Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11



Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land.

Leviticus 25:8-9

### Introduction

There is a time on rare and blessed nights during late summer and early autumn off the Alabama coast known as a “Mobile Bay Jubilee.” As if by magic, the sea gently offers up its bounty for free. All manner of fish and crustaceans wash in on a rising tide. The abundance of seafood is available to all those who can fill up a bucket fast enough. You can imagine the spontaneous celebrations that erupt as the word of the event spreads from neighbor to neighbor. And while each of the locals have their own signs for predicting a Jubilee, scientists agree that a very specific set of conditions must exist for one to take place.

And so it is with the Jubilee celebration of the people of God. A very specific set of conditions must be present. The Year of Jubilee was meant to be the culmination of the sabbatical years, which occurred every seventh year, and which were to be observed as:

“...a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD...” (Leviticus 25:4).

The word *jubilee* in the Hebrew is *yobel* and is rendered “trumpet” or “the horn of the ram made into a trumpet.” At the end of every 49 years on the Day of Atonement, the Trumpet of Jubilee was to be sounded. The Lord commanded Israel:

“Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land” (Leviticus 25:8-9).

Indeed, every 50th year was to be hallowed, and liberty proclaimed to all people. All debts were cancelled, slaves set free, and lands that had been sold returned. The land was not to be worked. No sowing, no reaping, and no pruning of vineyards. Spontaneous produce was to be left for the poor and those on a journey. God would meet their needs in the seventh year by His provision from the sixth. The Jubilee was a time for remembering God’s mercy and provision and for exercising compassion.

The number seven was important for Jubilee even as it was inseparable from many of the celebrations we have studied. Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles were all celebrated for seven days; the Jewish New Year, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles all occur in the seventh Jewish month; the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath; the Sabbatical Year was every seven years; and the Year of Jubilee followed seven Sabbatical Years. The importance of the number seven stems from God’s creation and the seventh day on which He rested.

Let’s take a look for a moment at three of the key features of the Year of Jubilee, and in so doing, begin to see how they apply to our lives today.

### Release (Personal Liberty)

In the Old Testament, God had redeemed His people, Israel, from bondage and none of them were again to be reduced to the status of slaves. However, through poverty, many of God’s cho-

For the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Romans 8:21

sen children became hired or indentured servants—that is, until the Year of Jubilee when they were set free. Thus, in God's economy, He made it possible for masters and servants to become brothers together, restoring God's design for relationships, and giving us a picture of the unity we can all experience as a body in Christ, although we were once slaves to our sin, "...He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

### Restoration (Restitution of Property)

The purpose of restoring property to its original owner was to demonstrate that the earth is subject to God's law and not to man's desires: "...because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants" (Leviticus 25:23).

Jubilee reestablished God's initial arrangement for the division of land and reminded His people that they were merely stewards of His creation. So often today, we find ourselves consumed by lifestyles centered around our possessions. It's called materialism. What a joy to know that God has made a way for us to gain a restored perspective. To know that we are just travelers, struggling through life together—citizens of the kingdom of heaven and not of this world. The Year of Jubilee foreshadows the restoration of all that has been perverted by mankind's sin, the establishment of true liberty for God's children, and the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption: "For the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God" (Romans 8:21).

### Response (Celebration)

As believers in Christ, we know that the debt for our sin has been paid, and as captives of that sin, we have been set free (Luke 4:18-19). Our response should be one of gratitude and celebration.

During the 1800's when slavery was commonplace in America, a beautiful black girl was brought into the market to be auctioned off. There were two very wealthy plantation owners with lustful eyes and evil intentions who began the bidding.

As the bidding climbed higher and higher, another gentlemen entered the arena and observed what these two scoundrels were up to. The gentleman stepped forward and with one sweeping bid far outbid any conceivable amount that either of these two rogues could afford.

As the frightened girl was led in chains before her new master, he said, "Cut the fetters from her hands and feet and set her free."

She looked at him with disbelief. He said to her, "I bought you to set you free." And he turned and walked away.

The beautiful young girl ran after him and fell at his feet. With tears streaming down her face, she looked into the eyes of her benevolent benefactor and said, "You have set me free...but I will be your slave forever."

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me...to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...

Isaiah 61:1a,2a

As Michael Card's song, "Jubilee" so aptly states, "to be so completely guilty and given over to despair, to look into your Judge's face and see a Savior there." JESUS IS OUR JUBILEE! What a cause for celebration. Hallelujah! Unfortunately though, we all too often find ourselves bound up in patterns of sin and lack the joy of knowing that we are truly free in Christ. Brother and sister, Jubilee is our reminder that our debts are canceled and that we can rest in His finished work for us on the Cross. You are the one He loves and you have been released. He will provide for you abundantly.

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor" (Isaiah 61:1-3).

### Summary

Christ has won our freedom. He has released us from the penalty of sin. He has restored us to the Heavenly Father. We are free to know God and serve Him forever.

One day, eternity will overcome time, and all the festivals of Israel will be blended into a celebration of God that will never end. That day will begin not just a "Year of Jubilee" but an eternal Jubilee for those who are in Christ Jesus. Hallelujah and Amen!

### Spending Time With God

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### Devotion (Personal Study)

1. From the commentary portion of this study guide, find and write down one insight related to the Year of Jubilee about which you are especially thankful to God.

4. Our Sabbath-rest is in Christ. If we're not resting then we must be struggling. Ask God to help you identify your specific struggles.

Take a moment to give God thanks, and also to ask Him for deeper insights as you study further.

2. Read Leviticus 25 so that you can gain better understanding of the context of the Jubilee. In establishing the sabbatical years and the Year of Jubilee, God was very specific in His instruction. What do you believe was in His heart as He spoke to Moses?

5. Read Matthew 6:25-34. Using these verses to examine your life, write down areas where you need to experience a "Jubilee" in order to be restored to a right relationship with God.

3. Read Hebrews 4:1-11 concerning the Sabbath rest for the people of God. As you consider God's care in establishing the Jubilee and His continued command for a Sabbath rest in the New Testament, what allows us to enter God's rest?

6. Read Matthew 22:37-39 (the Great Commandment). Are there relationships with God, others, or even yourself that need to be restored in love? Write down action steps you might take. How might you show charity?



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 5

The Year of Jubilee | Leviticus 25:8-9

7. John 10:10 says, “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.” Would you say that abundance is a characteristic that describes your life and relationship? Why or why not? Pray that God would bring His abundance into your life.

### Discussion (Small Group Study)

8. The Scriptures encourages us to rest from our work one day a week (Exodus 20:8-11). How does the world make entering God's Sabbath rest difficult? Share one struggle you have.

9. The Year of Jubilee can be viewed as a foreshadowing of the great eternal celebration after the Lord's return, when all debts are released and when we and the whole of creation are set free to enjoy true liberty in God.

Read Romans 8:19-21. Stretch your mind. Imagine what it will be like for creation to be set free. Describe it with words.

See Romans 8:23 and 1 Corinthians 15:35-58. Using Scripture as a guide, describe the new body we will receive when we meet the Lord. Discuss ways in which these bodies will be different from the bodies we now inhabit.

10. For the Israelites, every Sabbath anticipated the seventh (Sabbatical) year, which built anticipation toward the Year of Jubilee (following every seventh Sabbatical Year). It was as though God was telling His people to reflect each week on the great eternal redemption to come. Read 1 John 3:1-3. Discuss how each of us might benefit if we took time each week to think about the return of Christ and our upcoming eternal Jubilee.

11. Jubilee foreshadows the time when we will know and experience forgiveness as never before. We will be set free from the pain of insecurity and rejection, and the God who is love will “wipe every tear from our eyes” (Revelation 21:4). If we believed this more fully and remembered it constantly, how might our relationships with others be improved?



SERIES

CELEBRATING GOD | THE FESTIVALS IN FOCUS

LESSON 5

The Year of Jubilee | Leviticus 25:8-9

### Digging Deeper (Further Study)

12. The whole concept of a weekly Sabbath can lead to legalism (Matthew 12:1-14). What was your experience of the Sabbath as you grew up? If possible, describe a situation in which you or someone you know became ensnared in the legalism trap regarding a day of rest.

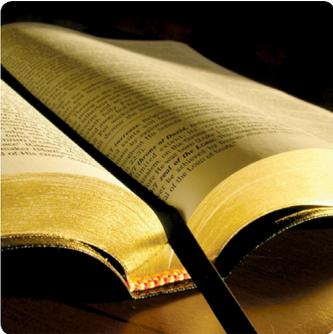
13. What is our safeguard against making Sunday a day of bondage to unrealistic expectations (Colossians 2:16-17)?

14. Read Isaiah 61:1-3 (Below). How might truths from this passage come to fruition in your life? Pray that God would make it so.

#### Scripture for Meditation

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of His splendor.

Isaiah 61:1-3



## BNEXT Small Group Leader's Guide

This BNEXT Leader's Guide is for facilitator/leaders. Please read this information before you begin. As the facilitator of a small group, you will have the experience of not only sharing this journey through God's Word with others but of aiding them along the way. You do not need previous experience or special training to lead a group. (Your primary responsibility is to serve as facilitator, not to teach.)

### MATERIALS NEEDED FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

- Either the electronic version or a printed copy for each participant. (The electronic version of this BNEXT Study can be printed. When printed, the blue boxes that were visible in the electronic version will print as blank spaces for participants to record their answers.)
- Bible for each participant, preferably the same version (these studies use the NIV)
- Pen or pencil for each participant
- Watch or clock to monitor time

### ABOUT THIS STUDY

This BNEXT study series is versatile and may be used by individuals, small groups, or even entire congregations. The use of a small group as part of the program will enhance each one's experience. BNEXT studies have successfully been used in a variety of environments, including home groups, churches, prisons, and businesses.

These lessons are designed for the individual to read the Scripture passages, read the three pages of commentary, and answer the questions throughout the week. The participants then attend a weekly meeting with the small group to share insights and discuss the material. Total time for each weekly lesson should be about 1 to 1½ hours in length. Suggested lesson plans with timing guidelines are found at the end of this Guide.

If you use this study in a large group or an entire church, there are two possible approaches. One approach is for the entire group to first gather for a welcome and opening prayer, after which participants can meet in small groups for discussion using the BNEXT questions. After a specified amount of time, all would reconvene into a larger setting to present highlights from each group, and for closing words of encouragement and prayer. The other approach is to begin together as a larger group for a welcome and then split into smaller groups for the remainder of the time/lesson.

## ABOUT SMALL GROUPS

**Group Size:** Experience has shown that a group size of 10–12 people works best. If your group is significantly larger, we suggest that you create additional small groups.

**Group Leaders:** Each group should have its own facilitator/leader. It is good to also have at least one back-up facilitator in case the primary facilitator is absent. If you have several groups meeting at one time, decide who will be responsible for facilitating the larger group gatherings for the welcome time and so forth.

## ABOUT FACILITATOR/LEADERS

These lessons are designed to easily be used by a first-time leader as well as an experienced leader. The ideal small group facilitator/leader should have:

- a hunger for God's Word and a deep desire to see others grow in their knowledge of God and His Word,
- a commitment to the group, emphasizing seeing the program through to the end,
- the ability to facilitate and moderate discussion rather than teach, and
- a willingness to follow the "Discussion Group Rules of Engagement" (found in this Leader's Guide).

As facilitator, pray for your small group. Spend time preparing your own lesson (you should attempt to answer all of the questions before the class) and be thinking about how to present the questions to the group. Group members should be encouraged to at least answer the first two sets of questions — Devotion (Personal Study) and Discussion (Small Group Study) questions — before each class, to enhance their learning experience. Even better, encourage them to find time to complete Digging Deeper (Further Study) questions on their own. One of the goals of this approach is to encourage participants to develop the habit of delving into Scripture and studying on a regular basis.

You are not expected to be a Biblical expert. You are a facil-

itator, so resist the attempt to teach. You are there to guide the group, keep them on track, and avoid getting caught up in doctrinal debates. If you want to facilitate the group with a broadened background knowledge, see our "Background Study Option" below.

Recognize that not everyone is comfortable answering questions. Gently keep discussion going by asking questions like, "Does anyone else have something to add?" It can be helpful at times to have a volunteer read Scripture texts that are referred to in the questions.

Recognize and affirm all who contribute to the discussion. Do not dismiss someone's answer as wrong. If an answer is obviously off-base, thank them for their answer, then ask what others think. Remind the group to let Scripture interpret Scripture.

If you feel that a certain statement or question is inappropriate for your group, you may omit it or at least recognize that not everyone needs to answer it. However, do not be afraid of letting the group tackle tough topics.

## BACKGROUND STUDY OPTIONS

Again, facilitators are not expected to be Biblical experts. If the group looks to you for an answer you do not have, it is perfectly fine to say, "I'm not sure. Perhaps we can all think about that one and bring it up again next week?" Or, "Let's bring this one up to the larger group when there is time allotted for such discussion." Or, "Let's see if this doesn't answer itself over the weeks as we continue our study. Remember, the Bible interprets itself."

For extra study, you may wish to approach your pastor or to read commentaries and use other resources. The internet contains a wealth of information ... and also disinformation. Some internet sites that provide reliable (and free) commentaries and articles include: [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com), [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com), and [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).

Another useful source of general Biblical knowledge is *The Essential Bible Companion*, by the same contributors of our *Bible*

in 90 Days study series: John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).

## LEADING THE CLASS (Suggested Lesson Plans)

### First Class

Decide where you want to meet weekly and decide on a time. Once this has been done, actively publicize the *BNEXT* study throughout all your circles — at your church, workplace, friends, family, etc. There are some free publicity aids on our website at [ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/](http://ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/freebies/). (If the study is being done by the entire congregation, recruit facilitators for each group and have one facilitator designated to lead the closing session when all come back together.)

Be sure that every participant has downloaded the electronic version or has a printed copy of the study at least one week prior to the first small group meeting. Have everyone complete the first lesson's reading and answer the questions in preparation for the first gathering of the group(s).

The first class is unique in that a little more time is spent on introductions and explanations of how the classes will function.

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of members (13 minutes)
 

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

  - a. Think of something brief each participant could say about themselves such as: "Tell us something unique about yourself." Or perhaps, "What do you hope to get out of this BNEXT study?"
  - b. Remind them to keep their answers brief (one minute or less).
2. Give an overview of the class and expectations (7 minutes)
  - a. Inform the class of how many weeks it will take to cover the study and the date of the last class.
  - b. Discuss the format of the BNEXT study and ask if

there are any questions.

- c. Review the "Rules of Engagement" which are located at the end of this Leader's Guide.
3. Discuss lesson questions (35 minutes)
    - a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that anyone would like to discuss with the group.
    - b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are provided to promote dialogue and conversation.
    - c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.
 

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes to allow for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share a highlight of their small group discussion.)
  4. Closing prayer (5 minutes)
    - a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
    - b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.
  5. If you are providing printed copies of lessons to participants, distribute the lesson for next week
  6. Dismissal

### Subsequent Classes

1. Opening prayer, welcome, and introduction of any new participants (10 minutes)

(NOTE: Entire church groups meet together for opening prayer only and then break into their small groups.)

- a. If there are new members, have them introduce themselves. Remind them to be brief (one minute or less).
- b. Think of a good ice-breaker that somehow relates to the study. For example, if you are studying "The Ten

Commandments – Exodus 20,” you may ask, “Why do you think Exodus or the Ten Commandments are important?” Or, “How do the Ten Commandments relate to the cross of Jesus Christ?” Remind them to keep their answers short. Set a time limit for this opening section; not everyone needs to answer.

- c. If you think it's necessary, remind the group of the “Rules of Engagement” at the end of this Guide.

## 2. Discuss lesson questions (45 minutes)

- a. Ask if there are any Devotion questions that people in the group would like to discuss.
- b. Give primary attention to the Discussion questions, which are designed to promote dialogue and conversation.
- c. If time permits, you may wish to use one or more of the Digging Deeper questions.

(NOTE: For an entire church, allow an extra 10-15 minutes for the groups to come back together at a specified time. Allow each group to share an insight of their small group discussion.)

## 3. Closing prayer (5 minutes)

- a. If time is short, then as the leader, pray for the group.
- b. If you have more time, you may ask if there are any prayer requests and either pray on behalf of the group or open it up for the group to pray.

## 5. Dismissal

### SMALL GROUP RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

It is important to treat one another in Christian love. These “Rules of Engagement” will be helpful, so read them aloud during the first class; thereafter, refer to them as needed by the group.

1. Begin each reading/study session with prayer, expecting God to speak to you through His Word.

2. Come prepared for each week's session by completing the reading and the study questions.
3. Your small group will have a facilitator. Please be respectful of the facilitator's leadership.
4. The facilitator's responsibility is to guide or shepherd the discussions. Do not expect your facilitator to be an expert on Scripture — each group member should seek the answers from Scripture on his/her own.
5. Each group member is invited to join the discussion but should not feel required to do so. If called upon, it is okay to say, “Thank you, but I would prefer to pass on answering that question.”
6. Alternatively, do not dominate a discussion. Time is limited, so please be sensitive to everyone in the group to help ensure that each person has the opportunity to participate.
7. Respect everyone's answers and views on Scripture. However, let Scripture interpret Scripture and expect the Holy Spirit to speak/teach through His written Word.
8. In preparation for each lesson, you are not expected to do extra study or research. If you wish to dig deeper, then here are a few helpful resources:
  - Go to [ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/](http://ScriptureAwakening.com/bnext/) for key tips and guidelines for best use of BNEXT study series in your small group or whole church.
  - The internet contains a wealth of information (and sometimes disinformation). Some useful Bible study sites include: [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com), [biblestudytools.com](http://biblestudytools.com), [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com), and [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).
  - *The Essential Bible Study Companion* (hard copy), by John Walton, Mark Strauss, and Ted Cooper Jr., Zondervan Publishing (also available as an e-book).