

Three Major Feasts Each Year (Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy

I. Background

- a. The **Book of Deuteronomy** consists of a few speeches that Moses gave to the Israelites near the end of their 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness.
- b. The second of Moses's addresses, which we are still in, began in **Deuteronomy 5** with Moses recounting the Lord giving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Thus far, in this second address, Moses has issued a number of warnings, admonitions, and reminders, along with specific instructions.
- c. Why these things matter to us Christians today.
 - i. We Christians are no longer bound to follow all the requirements in the Law of Moses, as was revealed in **Acts 15** at the Council in Jerusalem.
 - ii. Also, Paul explained in **Colossians 2**, the Law of Moses was “wiped out”, having been “nailed to the cross”.
 1. However, it is important to us to be aware that the things contained in the law provided “a shadow of things to come,” the substance of which has now been revealed to us through Christ.
 - a. “...having *wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us*, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having *nailed it to the cross*. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So *let no one judge you in food or in drink*, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are *a shadow of things to come*, but the substance is of Christ.”
(Colossians 2:14–17, NKJV)
 2. Also, as Paul reminded the Christians in his letter to the **Romans**, all the things written in the Old Testament books are there *to teach us* (the Christians).

- a. “For whatever things were written before were written *for our learning*, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” (**Romans 15:4**, NKJV)
- iii. As we have already seen, and will see again today, early Christians drew important and very practical concepts from what might seem rather obscure statements and passages in **Deuteronomy**.
 - 1. Recall that the Old Testament, particularly the Septuagint version, was the Bible of the church in the beginning, even before the New Testament was written and in circulation.
 - 2. Therefore, the apostles taught many important principles by quoting from the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. We can better appreciate the arguments they made in their epistles if we also know the **Book of Deuteronomy**.

II. Firstborn Animals Devoted to the Lord

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 15:19-23**.
 - i. The firstborn from among the oxen and sheep are to be *set apart for the Lord*, and sacrificed to Him.
 - ii. The animal to be sacrificed will do no work for the owner. It will be eaten by the owner’s household.
 - iii. Two exceptions:
 - 1. Defective animals (blind, lame, etc.) are not to be sacrificed to the Lord.
 - 2. None of the animal’s blood shall be eaten. It will be poured out on the ground.
- b. This practice of setting apart the firstborn for the Lord goes back to what happened in Egypt on the night of the Passover.
 - i. The Lord struck down all the firstborn males in Egypt, among men and livestock, on the night of the Passover. (**Exodus 11-12**)
 - ii. After striking down the firstborn of Egypt and giving the rules for observing the Passover/Pascha in the future, the Lord said:
 - 1. “Sanctify to Me all the firstborn, the first-begotten, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both men and cattle; it is Mine.” (**Exodus 13:2**, LXX, OSB)

2. Read **Exodus 13:11-16**.
 - a. When the infant Jesus is presented at the temple in **Luke 2:22-24**, his parents bring Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. There, Luke quotes from these **Exodus 13** passages regarding “every male who opens the womb” being dedicated to the Lord.
3. “All that open the womb are Mine: every male firstborn among your livestock, of oxen or sheep. But the firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a sheep, and if you will not redeem it, you shall pay a price. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty-handed.” (**Exodus 34:19-21**, LXX, OSB)
4. “For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, from man to cattle; on the day I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified them to myself.” (**Numbers 8:17**)
5. See also **Numbers 18:15-19**.
- c. It seems to me that this requirement to devote all the firstborn males to the Lord pointed back to the Passover in Egypt, but also pointed forward to Jesus Christ.
 - i. “He [*Jesus*] is the image of the invisible God, the *firstborn over all creation*. ...And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the *firstborn from the dead*, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (**Colossians 1:15-18**, NKJV)
 - ii. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be *the firstborn among many brethren*.” (**Romans 8:29**, NKJV)
 - iii. “...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, *the firstborn from the dead*, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” (**Revelation 1:5**, NKJV)
 - iv. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn* who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,” (**Hebrews 12:22-23**, NKJV)
 1. Not only is Jesus described as the “firstborn”. *We who follow Him* are also described as “the church of the firstborn”.

2. We, too, belong to the Lord and have been set apart for Him.
- d. The prohibition against eating blood is repeated here, in the instructions regarding eating the sacrificed firstborn male among the livestock. (**Deuteronomy 15:23**)
 - i. Read **Leviticus 17:10-14**.
 1. Israelites and resident aliens are forbidden to eat blood.
 2. The life of all flesh is in its blood.
 3. Blood makes atonement for the soul.
 - a. Why the blood of Christ is so important to sustain us, and to wash away our sins.
 - b. Also explains why the Jewish disciples struggled so much with Jesus' statement that they must "drink his blood" (**John 6**).
 - ii. In **Acts 15**, when the apostles met in Jerusalem to discuss whether Gentile believers would have to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses, James and the other apostles decided that they would only need to follow four requirements of the Law (and not the others). From the Law of Moses, Gentile Christians would have to abstain from the following four things:
 1. Eating meat from strangled animals.
 2. Eating things polluted by idols.
 3. Engaging in sexual immorality.
 4. Eating or drinking *blood*. (**Acts 15:19-21**)
 - a. Therefore, this prohibition on drinking blood still applies to Christians.

III. Three Annual Festivals where All Men Must Appear Before the Lord

- a. During each of these three special feasts, all Jewish men were supposed to come together in the special designated location (which ultimately would become Jerusalem, where the temple was built).
- b. **First Feast: Passover/Pascha/Unleavened Bread**
 - i. Read **Deuteronomy 16:1-8**.
 1. Sacrifice the Passover lamb at twilight.

2. Roast and eat the lamb (as directed in **Exodus 12**).
 3. Immediately after the day when the lamb is sacrificed and eaten, get rid of all leaven from the community, and eat *unleavened bread* for the next seven days.
 4. Unleavened bread, “the bread of affliction”, was a reminder of how they had departed Egypt in haste, without allowing their bread dough to rise.
- ii. The Greek word in the LXX for Passover is ‘*Pascha*’, which some early Christians believed had its origin in a Greek word meaning “to suffer”.
- iii. The Passover rules were initially given at the time of the first Passover, in Egypt, in **Exodus 12:1-20**.
1. Their annual calendar was to start with this month.
 2. They observed a lunar calendar (28 days/month). I assume this began with a ‘new moon’, in which case the ‘full moon’ would be on the 14th of the month.
 3. A lamb without blemish was to be selected on the 10th day of the month and then slaughtered on the 14th day of the month, one per household. The blood of the lamb was put on the lintel of the door of the house to protect those inside. The Jews observing this were to eat the flesh of the lamb that had been slaughtered.
 4. The Feast of Unleavened Bread started the morning after the evening when the Passover Lamb was slaughtered and eaten.
 5. The people must get all the yeast out of the house and keep it out for seven days.
 6. Anyone who did not get rid of the yeast was to be cut off from the community.
- iv. The Passover lamb foreshadowed Jesus.
1. “...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*” (**1 Peter 1:18–19**, NKJV)
 2. Read **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**.

- a. It is obvious from this passage that the Christians in Corinth, who were predominantly from Gentile backgrounds, were familiar with the Old Testament, including the **Book of Deuteronomy**. He uses that knowledge to teach them a very practical lesson about dealing with sin in the church.
- b. Paul rebukes the Corinthian church for tolerating sexual immorality (incest) involving a member of the church. In addressing the problem and revealing the solution, note that Paul draws from three different passages in **Deuteronomy**:
 - i. A man has his father's wife, a form of sexual immorality (incest) as forbidden by **Deuteronomy 23:1**.
 - ii. Now that the Passover Lamb (Jesus) has been slain, we must eat the bread without yeast (remove the sin) as explained by the foreshadowing in **Deuteronomy 16:1-8**.
 - iii. When serious sin is found in the community, we must "expel the evil from among you" as stated in **Deuteronomy 17:7**, as well as in several other places in the same book.
- c. **Second Feast: Pentecost/Weeks**
 - i. **Read Deuteronomy 16:9-12.**
 - 1. There are additional details in **Leviticus 23:9-22**.
 - ii. Outline of this festival (two parts).
 - 1. Part 1: This is marked by the first sheaf of the grain harvest. (**Leviticus 23:10-14**)
 - 2. Part 2: This commences *seven weeks* (+ 1 day) after the first sheaf offering. (**Leviticus 23:15-22**)
 - a. $(7 \times 7) + 1 = 50$ days. (Note that the word 'Pentecost' comes from the Greek word for 'fifty').
 - b. This was also called the *Feast of Weeks*, since it occurred 'a week of weeks' (or seven sevens) after the *start of the grain harvest*.
 - iii. This festival was associated with the harvest.

- iv. Originally, it was 50 days after the first sheaf of grain was harvested and offered (a date which could vary from year to year). Later, it was changed to 50 days after the Passover feast, a more fixed date.
 1. Since the 10 Commandments were given at Mount Sinai about 50 days after the first Passover, the giving of the Law became associated with this feast as well, in the minds of the Jews.
- v. There is significance in this feast, for us. This points to the spiritual harvest.
 1. It is fitting that the great harvest of souls began on the Day of Pentecost in **Acts 2**.
 - a. *“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 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. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:1–4, NKJV)*
 - b. *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day *about three thousand souls were added to them.*” (Acts 2:38–41, NKJV)*
 2. This also reminds me of some things Jesus said regarding the spiritual harvest of souls he was looking for.
 - a. *“Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” (Matthew 9:37–38, NKJV)*
 - b. *“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:35, NKJV)*

- c. Recall also that in the Parable of the Wheat and Tares in **Matthew 13**, the righteous are described as being like wheat grain growing in a field. Both the righteous and unrighteous grow together in the field until the time of the harvest.
 3. This festival and the harvest-oriented passages of Scripture are sober reminders, to me, that we are in the midst of a spiritual harvest field.
- vi. The Lord wants us to be busy sowing the word and reaping a harvest among those we are with!

d. **Third Feast: Tabernacles**

- i. Read **Deuteronomy 16:13-15**.
- ii. Definition: the Greek word used here in the LXX (skene / σκηνή), also found in the New Testament, means: 'tent', 'tabernacle' or 'booth'.
 1. It referred to a temporary structure that could be made from branches, boards and/or fabric (such as a tent).
 2. The tabernacle proper was the portable structure made of fabric that housed the Holy Place, the Most Holy Place and the ark of the covenant. This was constructed while the Jews were in the Wilderness, and was utilized for worship until the time of Solomon.
 - a. During Solomon's reign, the tabernacle was replaced by the temple, which was a permanent-type structure made largely of stone and timber.
- iii. Elements of this feast are also described in **Leviticus 23:33-44**.
 1. This festival would begin on the 15th day of the seventh month and continue for seven more days.
 2. There would be a holy convocation on the first and last days of the festival.
 3. The Jews would make temporary structures from tree branches and live in these booths through the seven-day period.
 - a. I imagine this must have been a popular and memorable annual event for the children.

- iv. The reason for this festival (with its unusual requirement to live in booths for seven days) was to remind God's people of when the Lord had them dwell in tents/booths after they came out of Egypt, while they were in the Wilderness.
 1. Perhaps this explains why Jesus chose the Feast of Tabernacles to reveal an important aspect of His mission.
 - a. "Now the Jews' *Feast of Tabernacles* was at hand..."
(John 7:2, NKJV)
 - b. "On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."
(John 7:37-39, NKJV)
 2. Jesus' statement that he would provide "rivers of water" is given in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorates the time in the Wilderness during the Exodus Journey. Back then, the people drank water that came from the rock.
 - a. Paul refers to the Israelites drinking from the rock in the Wilderness and equates the rock with Christ.
 - i. "...and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they *drank of that spiritual Rock* that followed them, and *that Rock was Christ.*" **(1 Corinthians 10:4, NKJV)**
- v. Perhaps there is another lesson for us from the Feast of Tabernacles.
 1. Recall that the word "sleep" is often used as a metaphor for death throughout both the Old and New Testaments. I am sure you can think of many examples.
 2. **Question:** What is the word "tent" or "tabernacle" often a metaphor for, in the Scriptures?
 - a. **Answer:** The term 'tent/tabernacle' is used throughout the Bible as a figure or metaphor for *our physical bodies*.

- b. Our 'tents' (our bodies) are temporary structures that will be replaced with permanent ones (at the resurrection of the dead), as the tabernacle of Moses was replaced by the temple of Solomon.
- b. For those who may be unfamiliar with this foundational historic Christian teaching (the resurrection of our physical bodies on the Last Day), a few comments follow.
 - i. At the Second Coming of Jesus, all the bodies of the dead will be raised, transformed, and reunited with the spirit of the dead person (which has been awaiting that day in Hades, the abode of the dead souls awaiting judgment).
 - ii. Jesus spoke about this in **John 5:28-29**. Paul explained this in more detail in **1 Corinthians 15**.
 - iii. The resurrection of the dead (bodies) is one of the six foundational, elementary teachings of the faith listed in **Hebrews 6:1-2**. This is also part of the *Apostles Creed*, an ancient summary of the basics of the Christian faith.
 - iv. The pattern established by Jesus Himself shows us what to expect if we follow Him.
 - 1. After death, the body remains in the tomb/grave, and the soul goes to Hades for a period. (**Acts 2:27-32**)
 - 2. Upon being resurrected, the body is transformed and reunited with the spirit. The tomb is empty. The resurrected one has a physical body. (**John 20:1-9, John 20:20-29, Luke 24:39-43**)
 - 3. Jesus, as the "firstborn from among the dead" (**Colossians 1:18, Revelation 1:5**), set the pattern for us to follow. We will become like He is (**1 Corinthians 15:42-49**).
- 3. Examples from Scripture where the term "tent/tabernacle" is used to refer to a human physical body, which will be replaced

by a permanent structure (a resurrected, transformed body), include the following:

- a. “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must *put off my tent*, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” (**2 Peter 1:13-14**, NKJV)
 - i. Here, Peter is speaking figuratively about his own death approaching.
- b. Read **Acts 15:12-17**, where James quotes from **Amos 9:11-12**.
 - i. “And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ‘After this I will return And will rebuild the *tabernacle of David, which has fallen down*; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.’” (**Acts 15:15-17**, NKJV)
 - ii. In this prophecy, the “fallen down tent/tabernacle of David” refers to the crucified body of Jesus, which was then raised up and restored.
 - iii. Therefore, James reasoned, the second part of the prophecy (the Gentiles seeking the Lord) was being fulfilled, as well.
 - iv. Also note the prophecy of **Zechariah 14:16-19** where it speaks of the nations (the Gentiles) coming to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This also points to the gospel going out to all the nations (not just the Jews).
- c. In **2 Corinthians 5:1-5**, Paul also uses the term ‘tent/tabernacle’ to refer to our earthly bodies.
 - i. “For we know that if *our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in *this tent* groan,

being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. (**2 Corinthians 5:1-4**, NKJV)

4. Early Christian writer Methodius (d. 311 AD), in a work entitled *The Banquet of the 10 Virgins*, wrote about how the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadowed *the resurrection of the body*, which Christians look forward to on the Last Day when Jesus returns.
 - a. “[*Following an extended quote from **Leviticus 23:39-42** describing the Feast of Tabernacles, the writer continues...*]
 - b. “... Here the Jews, fluttering about the bare letter of Scripture, like drones about the leaves of herbs, but not about flowers and fruits as the bee, fully believe that these words and ordinances were spoken concerning such a tabernacle as they erect; as if God delighted in those trivial adornments which they, preparing, fabricate from trees, not perceiving the wealth of good things to come; whereas these things, being like air and phantom shadows, foretell the resurrection and the putting up of our tabernacle that had fallen upon the earth, which at length... resuming again immortal, we shall celebrate the great feast of true tabernacles in the new and indissoluble creation, the fruits of the earth having been gathered in, and men no longer begetting and begotten, but God resting from the works of creation.”
 - c. “...in the seventh month, the great resurrection-day, it is commanded that the Feast of our Tabernacles shall be celebrated to the Lord, of which the things said in **Leviticus** are symbols and figures, which things, carefully investigating, we should consider the naked truth itself, ...
 - d. “[*Speaking of the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day*] ...For then will all our tabernacles be firmly set up, when again the body shall rise, with bones again joined and compacted with flesh. Then shall we celebrate truly to the Lord a glad festal-day, when we shall receive eternal tabernacles, no more to perish or be dissolved into the dust of the tomb.

- e. "... Now, our tabernacle was at first fixed in an immoveable state, but was moved by transgression and bent to the earth, God putting an end to sin by means of death, lest man immortal, living a sinner, and sin living in him, should be liable to eternal curse.
- f. "[*Therefore*] ...I praise God who by means of death frees His sons from death, and I celebrate lawfully to His honor a festal-day, adorning my tabernacle, that is my flesh, with good works, as there did the five virgins with the five-lighted lamps."
 - i. (Source: Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*, Discourse 9, chapters 1-2; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 6, pp. 344-347)
 - ii. Points made by Methodius:
 - 1. We can see in this unusual festival, celebrated during the seventh month, a foreshadowing of the resurrection on the Last Day.
 - 2. At that time, our own earthly 'tabernacles' (our bodies) will be replaced with permanent dwellings from heaven.
 - iii. Methodius saw in Jesus' parable that the oil of the five virgins represented *good works*, which must be part of our lives if we are to be prepared for the return of Jesus.

IV. All Men to Gather in One Place During these Three Festivals

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 16:16-17**.
- b. Note that God would use these festivals later, during the time of Jesus and the apostles, when all the men were gathered in Jerusalem, to bring about significant things. All three prepared the way for Jesus' ministry, the establishment of the church, and significant events in Jewish history.
 - i. Passover
 - 1. The Last Supper and the crucifixion of Jesus occurred at this time, when the Jews had gathered in Jerusalem. (**Matthew 26:17-19, Luke 22:15, John 19:14**)

2. Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus and the Romans in 70 AD. Josephus pointed out that it was easier for the Romans to lay siege to the city and starve out those within its walls due to the surge in population during the Passover season holiday.
 - a. From the account of Falvius Josephus in *Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, chapter 9.3:
 - i. “Now the number of those that were carried captive during this whole war was collected to be ninety-seven thousand; as was the number of those that perished during the whole siege eleven hundred thousand, the greater part of whom were indeed of the same nation [with the citizens of Jerusalem], but not belonging to the city itself; *for they were come up from all the country to the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, and were on a sudden shut up by an army, which, at the very first, occasioned so great a straitness among them, that there came a pestilential destruction upon them, and soon afterward such a famine, as destroyed them more suddenly.”
 - ii. Pentecost/Weeks
 1. **Acts 2**: Jews from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit came down, the church started, and 3,000 men were baptized.
 - iii. Tabernacles
 1. **John 7** – Jesus reveals Himself, teaching in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles.
 - a. “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (**John 7:37-38**, NKJV)
- c. In *Proof of the Gospel*, a great Christian apologetic work written c. 320 AD, Eusebius pointed to this requirement (that all Jewish men from all over the world gather in Jerusalem three times each year) as a classic reason why the Law of Moses had to be replaced. It was not possible that Christians coming from all nations could all follow this requirement! Eusebius makes a compelling case for that, as follows:

- i. "THAT the enactments of Moses, as I said, were only applicable to the Jews, but not to all of them, and certainly not to the dispersed (among the Gentiles), only in fact to the inhabitants of Palestine, will be plain to you if you reflect thus. For the law of Moses says:
- ii. "'Thrice in the year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God.' And it defines more exactly at what place they should all meet, when it says: 'Three times in the year shall thy males appear before the Lord, thy God, in the place which the Lord shall choose.' (**Deuteronomy 16:16**)
- iii. "You see that it does not bid them meet in each city, or in any indefinite place, but 'in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.' There thrice a year it enacts that they must assemble together, and it determines the times, when they must meet at the place where the rites of the worship there are to be celebrated. One season is that of the Passover, the second, fifty days later, is called the Feast of Pentecost, and the third is in the seventh month after the Passover, on the Day of Atonement, when all the Jews still perform their fast. And a curse is laid on all who do not obey what is enacted.
- iv. "It is plain that all who were to meet at Jerusalem thrice in the year and perform their rites would not be able to live far from Judaea: but they live all round its boundaries. If then it would be impossible even for the Jews whose home is the farthest from Palestine to obey their law, it would be absurd to hold that it could be applicable to all nations and to men in the uttermost parts of the earth.
- v. [*Eusebius then provides other examples that could not be followed by everyone, worldwide; especially those involving the temple in Jerusalem. Further, he lays out the problem of the Law of Moses, and states that the solution provided by Jesus is a new, better and universally applicable law.*]
- vi. "What, then, must be our conclusion from all this, when, as we have said, we find Moses summing up his whole system with a curse, where he says: 'Cursed is everyone, who shall not remain in all the things written in this law, to do them'?
- vii. "Was it, then, meant that Moses' future disciples from the ends of the earth must do all these things, if they were to escape the curse and receive the blessing promised to Abraham? Were they to go thrice a year to Jerusalem, and were the female worshippers of all nations, fresh from the pangs of childbirth, to undertake so long a journey, to offer the sacrifice ordained by Moses for each one of their children?

- viii. “Were those who had touched a dead body, or had forsworn themselves, or had sinned against their will, to come from the ends of the earth, to run and hasten to the purification that was required by the law, in order to escape the visitation of the curse? Of course it is clear to you that it was hard enough to follow Moses' rule of life for those who lived round Jerusalem, or only inhabited Judaea, and that it was quite out of the question for the other nations to fulfil it.
- ix. “Hence, of course, our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Son of God, said to His disciples after His Resurrection: ‘Go and make disciples of all the nations,’ and added: ‘Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.’ (**Matthew 28:18-20**)
- x. “For He did not bid them to teach the laws of Moses to all nations, but whatsoever He Himself had commanded: that is to say, the contents of the Gospels. And agreeably to this His disciples and apostles in considering the requirements of the Gentiles decided that Moses' enactments were unsuitable to their needs, since neither they themselves nor their fathers had found them easy to be kept. As St. Peter says in the Acts: ‘Now therefore why do ye attempt to lay a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?’ (**Acts 15:10**)
- xi. [*Moses and the other prophets spoke about this future solution, in the prophecies.*]
- xii. “And agreeably to this Moses himself for this very reason said that another prophet would be raised up ‘like him’; and publishes the good news that he should be a lawgiver for all the nations. He speaks of Christ in a riddle. He orders his followers to obey him in these prophetic words. ‘A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you from your brethren, like unto me, you shall hear him [whatever he says to you]. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that prophet shall be cast out of its race.’ (**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**)”
 1. (Source: Eusebius, *Proof of the Gospel*, book 1, chapter 3)
 2. Eusebius is right. After the kingdom was opened up to people from all nations, all over the world, can you imagine all of those men attempting to pile into one city *three times every year*?
 - a. That would be utterly impossible!
 3. The Law of Moses had to be replaced by a new and better law, given by Christ: one that all people, anywhere in the world, would be able to follow.

V. Conclusions

- a. We are no longer bound by the Law of Moses, including observing the “festivals, new moons and sabbaths”. However, those things were “a shadow of things to come” (**Colossians 2:16-17**).
- b. The rules to redeem the firstborn from among the livestock not only point back to the Passover in Egypt, but also to Jesus, the firstborn over all creation.
 - i. This therefore also applies to us who are members of the church of the firstborn, who are set apart for the Lord.
- c. The three festivals not only reminded the people of how God had delivered them in the past, but they also prepared the way for Jesus and His ministry.
 - i. Passover/Pascha/Unleavened Bread
 1. Crucifixion of Christ, our Passover Lamb.
 2. The Lord’s Supper we celebrate weekly.
 3. Unleavened bread that followed pointed to how we must get the sin out of the community!
 - ii. Pentecost / Weeks
 1. The spiritual harvest that started in **Acts 2**.
 - iii. Tabernacles
 1. Pointed to Jesus as the source of living water in **John 7**.
 2. Points to our bodily “tabernacle” being replaced with a permanent structure on the Last Day.
- d. As Eusebius pointed out, God’s plan was always to bless *all nations* through Abraham. However, it would have been impossible for *all nations* to follow these requirements from the Law of Moses. That required another prophet “like Moses” who would bring new and better laws: ones that *all the nations could follow*.