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### The Jewish Festivals Mentioned in the New Testament

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THE JEWISH FESTIVALS MENTIONED IN THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

A Thesis  
presented to the faculty of  
Concordia Seminary,  
St. Louis, Mo.

by

Walter H. Koenig

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requirements for the degree  
of

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## Bibliography

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The Life and Times of Jesus

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Expositor's Greek Testament

THE JEWISH FESTIVALS MENTIONED IN

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

As far as the life of the New Testament believer is concerned, the ancient festivals of the Jews are null and void. All Old Testament rites and ceremonies, which were only "a shadow of things to come" (Col. 2,16), have been abrogated by the coming of God's Son into the flesh. But even though the Jewish festivals are no longer to be observed by us, we cannot afford to forget all about them. Leaving the Old Testament out of the question altogether, the proper understanding of the New Testament alone demands a thorough investigation of all that is connected with those old festivals. It is impossible, for example, to view the life of Christ correctly without having as background the knowledge of Jewish religious life in His time. The subject of this thesis, therefore, is well worthy of consideration.

The New Testament contains an abundance of references to the Jewish festivals. To exhaust the significance of these references would be impossible in a short treatise of this kind. We shall, therefore, pass over their doctrinal importance and limit ourselves to a study of their bearing upon the exegesis of the New Testament. We shall treat chiefly those rites and customs whose knowledge is necessary for the proper interpretation of the New Testament text.

The following Jewish festivals<sup>\*</sup> are mentioned in the New Testament:

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\*The Sabbath day might also be considered in this thesis, but it is really distinct and is a study for itself.

1. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread;
2. Pentecost;
3. The Feast of Tabernacles;
4. Day of Atonement;
5. New Moon;
6. The Feast of Purim;
7. The Feast of Dedication.

### The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Properly speaking the Passover, which was celebrated on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was observed from the 15th till the 21st of Nisan, were distinct (Lev. 23,56; Mark 16,1). The two are, however, generally treated as one, so too in the New Testament (Mt. 26,17), and we shall treat them as one.

#### (A) General Points of Interest-

The Passover enjoys by far the most frequent reference in the New Testament. It was one of those festivals concerning which God had said: "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose" (Deut. 16,16). This command was not always carried out in the history of the Jews. At Christ's time, however, all outward ceremonies were punctiliously observed, so also the attendance at these three great festivals; The Passover, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles.

The New Testament references show us that Jews gathered from all parts of the civilized world to attend the Passover. From Lk. 22,2 we learn that the chief priests and scribes feared to attack Jesus at the time of the Passover, undoubtedly because of the great multitude of people in Jerusalem. Jews from Greece, for example,

attended the feast (Jn. 12,20). Josephus claims that in A.D. 65 there were three million people at the festival (Jew.Wars vi, 9,3; ii, 14,3). From the standpoint of the Romans, then, it was good diplomacy when at this time of the year they set one prisoner free (Jn. 18,37), when Herod at the time of the Passover killed James and imprisoned Peter (Acts, 12).

As Jesus was desirous of fulfilling all righteousness, so He without doubt was present at Jerusalem for every Passover. John bears witness that Jesus attended three times during His ministry (Jn. 2,13; 6,4; 12,1). The first attendance that is recorded of Jesus took place with His parents when He was twelve years of age (Lk. 2,41). According to rabbinical law young men had to attend at the age of twelve (Yoma, 82a). Perhaps therefore Luke makes particular mention of this visit.

From Jesus' first recorded visit we also learn that the people went to Jerusalem in companies. As they marched along, the older ones sang their pilgrim psalms, the Psalms of Degrees, 120-134. The women were not required to go (Deut. 16.16: "males"), but as noticed in the case of Mary, they often went along. Jerusalem with its vicinity was packed for those festival occasions. Bethany and Bethphage are especially mentioned by the Talmud as having been very hospitable to these pilgrims. The people paid nothing for such hospitality, but left their hosts the skins of their sacrifices and the sacred vessels used in the services.

The participants had to be levitically clean (Num. 9,10). Therefore we read Jn. 11,55: "Many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves". Perhaps  
11,  
1 Cor. <sup>11,</sup>27.28 ( "unworthily") is an allusion to this ceremonial law. As the Israelites were forbidden to take part in the Passover while

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in a state of "uncleanness", so Paul condemns partaking of the Lord's Supper "unworthily".

In Mt. 23,27 Jesus compares the scribes to "whited sepulchres". This may be <sup>a</sup>reference to a rabbinical ordinance connected with the Passover. Cemeteries were always situated in the cities, but an ordinance which the rabbis said was handed down from Joshua stipulated that bodies found in the open field should be buried on the spot where they were found. Now one month before the Passover these isolated sepulchres had to be whitened so that every one might easily <sup>see</sup> them and guard against levitical "uncleanness".

The expression: "the seal of God in their foreheads", found Rev. 7,2.3; 9,4, is clearly an allusion to the typical meaning of the blood which the Jews had to sprinkle on their doorposts at the first Passover. Those who have been sealed as the servants of our God in their foreheads are safe from destruction. Cf. Ezek. 9,4.

(B) The Passover References at the Institution of the Lord's Supper-

The New Testament references to the Passover in connection with the institution of the Lord's Supper are of special interest to us. To understand the institution of this New Testament sacrament we must be able to picture to ourselves the events which took place on that momentous night.

The account of Christ's last Passover begins with Mt. 26,17 when the disciples asked Him: "Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?" This question on the part of the disciples was not a useless one, for the Jews had to attend to all kinds of special preparations for the Passover.

In the first place the house had to be cleansed of all leaven. The house was searched with a candle on the evening of the 13th of Nisan, at the latest on the morning of the 14th. St. Paul refers to this custom, when he admonishes the Christians to "purge out the old leaven --- for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5,9). Paul's Jewish hearers would naturally rise up with indignation at the thought: The Passover already sacrificed and the leaven not yet removed! Paul wants the same indignation to fill their hearts at the thought of <sup>leading a</sup> sinful life after Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for our sin.

Someone else undoubtedly took care of these preparations for Christ and His disciples, for they found a room ready for them (Mk. 14,15), most likely supplied with the necessary sofas and pillows. The disciples, however, had to procure all the needed victuals for the meal. They had to select a Passover lamb which was free from all blemish, not less than eight days nor more than one year old. One lamb was sufficient for one company consisting of from ten to twenty. These lambs were bought in Jerusalem. They might also be bought in the temple, but Jesus only a few days before had driven these cattle dealers out of the temple (Mt. 21,12). The disciples also had to see to the slaying of the lamb. This was done in the temple after the evening sacrifice (See Edersheim, "The Temple", p. 222-226). After finding someone to roast the lamb, they were ready to eat the Passover.

As Jesus at all times followed the Jewish laws and customs, except in instances where He wanted to show His superiority over the Law, so we can take for granted that He followed the usual Passover ceremonies. The liturgy of the Passover has been greatly changed since the time of Jesus, but the usages and rites are mostly the

same in our day as they were nineteen hundred years ago. We can picture to ourselves the scene with Jesus gathered in that upper chamber with His disciples, all reclining in a leaning posture on couches around the table. This posture made it easy for John to lean "on Jesus' bosom" (Jn. 13,23).

These edibles come into chief consideration at the meal itself: the lamb, the bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and wine. Wine had not been originally commanded by God as a necessary part of the meal, but it becomes important because of its place in the institution of the Lord's Supper. The word *οἶνος* is not used in the record of the institution. The New Testament only says: "the cup", "fruit of the vine" (Lk. 22,18.20). It is implied that the cup contained the usual liquid. Now the use of wine was strictly demanded by tradition. Even the poorest must have "at least four <sup>cups,</sup> though he were to receive the money for it from the poor's box" (Pes. x,1).

The Passover meal began with a "giving of thanks" over the first cup of wine. The first cup was then drunk and each washed his hands. It was at this point of the meal, perhaps, that Jesus gave His disciples that lesson in humility by washing their feet (Jn.13,2<sup>2</sup>). The Authorized Version: "And supper being ended" seems to point against this, but the original text reads: *ὅτε πρὸς γεγενημένου* and may be translated: "When supper had come" or "was begun". Cf. Mt. 27, 1: *ἠρπυίας γεγενημένης*, "morning having dawned". Undoubtedly Luke also refers to this first cup when he says: "And He took the cup and gave thanks and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves", for not until v.20 the "cup" of the Lord's Supper is mentioned.

After the washing of hands the paschal table was brought in. The head of the table took some of the herbs, dipped them in salt water, took some of them himself, and gave them to the others. Then the dishes were all taken away and the second cup of wine filled. At this point the housefather was to explain the feast to his children. The dishes were then returned and the meaning of the lamb, the bitter herbs, and unleavened explained in succession. After this there followed the singing of the first part of the Hallel (Ps. 113-114), drinking of the second cup, washing of the hands for the second time, breaking of one of the two cakes of unleavened bread, and "giving thanks". Concerning this last point it is clearly stated by rabbinical authorities that this "thanksgiving" was to follow the breaking of bread. Therefore Christ very likely instituted His Supper later on, for He first gave thanks and then brake the bread (Mt. 26,26; Mk. 14,22; Lk. 22,19; 1 Cor. 11,24).

After this "thanksgiving" pieces of the bread with bitter herbs between them were dipped in the Charoseth, a compound of raisins, dates, etc., and vinegar, and were handed to every one at the table. This probably was the "sop" which Christ gave to Judas (Jn. 13,25). Consequently Judas did not take part in the eating of the Passover lamb itself, much less the Lord's Supper, for he "having received the sop went immediately out" (Jn. 13,30).

The Passover supper proper, which followed next, consisted of unleavened bread with bitter herbs, of the festive offering (Chagiga) and finally of the Passover lamb itself. After the hands were washed again, the third cup filled, and grace after meat said. At this point Jesus without doubt "when He had given thanks", broke the bread and instituted the Lord's Supper. Immediately afterwards the third cup was drunk after a special thanksgiving had been spoken over it.

This seems to have been the cup which Jesus used in the institution<sup>1</sup> of His Supper. St. Paul calls the cup of the Lord's Supper "the cup of blessing" (1 Cor. 10,16). The Jews also called this third cup "the cup of blessing" (Berac. 51,1). The Passover meal ended with the fourth cup and the singing of the second part of the Hallel. The "hymn" mentioned in Mt. 26,30 is most likely this concluding section of the Hallel.

So much for the Lord's<sup>A</sup> <sup>Supper.</sup> It would truly be impossible to portray the institution of the Lord's Supper vividly before our mind without a knowledge of the ceremonies connected with the Passover<sup>-only.</sup> We shall close this portion of our work with a few concluding remarks. When Judas left the table, we are told the other disciples did not think much of this. Some thought that he was going out to "buy those those things that we have need of over against the feast". This "feast" was the second Chgigah<sup>a</sup> which was offered the next day on the 15th of Nisan. The Jews were allowed to procure on the Passover the necessary things for that Chagigah. It is also this second Chagigah to which Jn. 18,28 refers. The Jews did not want to enter the judgment-hall of Pilate, for they were afraid that would defile themselves and be unable to eat this Chagigah. The day on which Christ<sup>t</sup> instituted His Supper is also called the "day of preparation" (Mt. 27,62; Mk. 15,42). This day was the preparation for the "Sabbat"<sup>-at</sup> of the Passover, for the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. See following page under "Feast of Weeks".

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost).

The second of the three great annual festivals of the Jews at which every male had to appear in Jerusalem was the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34,22.23). It was so called because it took place seven complete weeks after the consecration of the harvest season by the offering of the sheaf of the first ripe barley (Lev. 23,15.16). This offering was made on the "morrow after the Sabbath" (Lev. 23,11). According to the LXX translators (Lev. 23,7.11) and those who directed the building of the second temple (Antiq. iii, 10,5) this "Sabbath" was the first day of the festival of unleavened bread. The Feast of Weeks, then, was celebrated on the sixth day of the third month, Sivan (June).

Because the festival fell on the fiftieth day after the "waving of the sheaf", it received the name of "Pentecost". It is under this name that we find reference to it in the New Testament.

Only one reference of the New Testament will demand our attention, namely Acts 2. It has been disputed whether the events recorded Acts 2 really took place on the Hebrew Pentecost. The language in v.1 gave rise to this dispute, for we read there: "When the day of Pentecost was now fully come". Weiss (ad. loc.) interprets this expression to mean a short time before the day of Pentecost. The verb *ἐπιτελέσθω* is used only by Luke and he only uses it three times, Lk. 8,23; 9,51; Acts 2,1. Lk. 9,51 reads: "And it came to pass, when the time was (literally: the days were) come, that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem". This verse is brought forth as corroboration of the view which Weiss holds. But "the parallel passage in Lk. 9,51 cannot be quoted to

support the view that the reference here (Acts 2,1) is to a period preceding the day of Pentecost since in that passage we have <sup>has</sup> ἡμέρας (plural), not ἡμέραν as here, and although the interpretation of the word as referring to the approach of the Feast is possible, yet the circumstances and the view evidently taken by the narrator points decisively to the very day of the Feast" ( Exp. Gr. Test, ii,72). As we see from Ex. 7,25 and Jer. 36,10 (LXX), Luke is following the Hebrew mode of expressing that the day of Pentecost had altogether come.

This Pentecost happened to fall on a Sunday. The "waving of the sheaf" had taken place on Saturday, the 16th of Nisan, because the 17th (the third day after three o'clock of the 15th) was on a Sunday. Therefore the fiftieth day after the "waving of the sheaf" fell on the first day of the week, and so it happened that the Christian Church observes its Pentecost on a Sunday.

Pentecost was a most opportune time for the birth of the New Testament Christian Church at Jerusalem. Acts 2,9-11 gives us an idea as to the diversity of foreign countries from which the Jews had come for this festival, and they were devout Jews (v.5). The meeting at which the Holy Spirit was poured out undoubtedly was held in the temple hall adjoining the spacious courts. A great number of these Jews gladly received the Word, and when they returned to their respective homes, they were a mighty influence for the Gospel.

The Feast Of Tabernacles.

The most joyous of the great annual Jewish festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles, is also mentioned in the New Testament. This festival was celebrated from the 15th to the 21st of Tishri ( the seventh month, corresponding to our October) and received its name from the divinely instituted custom of living in booths during its celebration (Lev. 23,40-42) which, after the establishment of the sanctuary at Jerusalem, were erected in the open places of the city, on the roofs and in the courts of the houses, in the precincts of the temple (Neh. 8,16), and in the open places outside the city. An eighth day of solemn assembly was added to the festival (Lev. 23,36), but it was distinct from the festival proper, and the requirement to dwell in booths did not extend to it.

Certain post-Mosaic ceremonies connected with the Feast of Tabernacles throw an interesting light upon two passages in John's Gospel, Jn. 7,37 and 8,12. The first passage reads: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink". It seems very evident that these words are an allusion to a ceremony of the Feast, called the "pouring of water". Most Modern writers, however, cannot agree as to what John means by the "last day", whether it was the seventh, the last day of the Feast proper or the added eighth day which was really distinct from the Feast. The question is not exactly of such weighty moment, but it amounts to the following: Most rabbinical authorities furnish the information that the libation of water did not occur on the eighth day, because it really did not belong to the Feast. This is undoubtedly correct. The tract Succa indeed quotes Rabbi Juda Hakkadosh as saying that the libation did occur on the eighth day,

but the tract itself distinctly asserts the contrary. Now then, did Jesus speak out His invitation on the seventh day when the water was poured or on the eighth day when it was not poured? The significance of Jesus' words remains the same in either case, but the external motive of His words will be slightly affected by a decision of the question. Before entering upon this question, however, let us picture to ourselves the service as it took place daily during the feast proper<sup>-21.</sup>

Early in the morning the pilgrims left their booths each carrying the lulabh ("palm-branch"), a myrtle and willow-branch tied together with a palmbranch between them. The people divided into <sup>three</sup> three bands. Some would remain in the temple to attend the preparation for the morning sacrifice. Another band went to a place "below Jerusalem" (Succ. 4,5) called Moza where they cut down willow branches to decorate the altar. The third band followed a priest carrying a golden pitcher/~~pitcher~~ to the Pool of Siloam. According to Josephus the pool was situated at the extremity of the valley of cheesemongers, near a bend of the old wall beneath Ophlas (Ophel). Cf. Jew. Wars, v, 4,1.2. It was fed by a living spring farther up the Kidron Valley. The priest filled the pitcher with water from this pool and then the band went back to the temple so timing themselves that they arrived just as the pieces of sacrifice were placed on the great altar of burnt-offering (Tos. Succ. 3,8), towards the close of the morning sacrifice service. A three-fold trumpet-blast welcomed the arrival of the priest, In the court of the priests another priest carrying wine joined him and they both went to the altar pouring out the water and wine into two separate silver funnels at the West side of the altar. Meanwhile there was heard the sound of cymbals and trumpets and the singing of the words, Is. 12,3: "With joy shall ye draw water out of

the well of salvation", Immediately after the pouring of the water the great Hallel was sung (Ps. 113-118) antiphonally. As the people responded in the last part of Ps. 118, they waved their palms towards the altar. Then followed the special sacrifice<sup>s</sup> for the day with their drink offerings and the psalm for the day. The service closed with a procession around the altar by the priests.

The service on the seventh day, then, was as outlined above, unless, as Edersheim says, the priests encircled the altar seven times at the close of the service. According to general opinion the service was about the same on the eighth day except that, as stated above, the libation of water did not occur.

Now which was the "last", that "great" day of the feast? Edersheim says: "We can scarcely doubt that it was the concluding day of the Feast, and not, as most modern writers suppose, its Octave, which in Rabbinical language, was re-garded a "festival by itself, (Yoma, 3a)". At another place he brings forth the six points of difference which draw the line between the feast proper and the additional eighth day of solemn assembly. Cf. Edersheim, Life and Times of Jesus, ii, p. 156.

In this case Jesus would have spoken His words right after the "pouring of water", after the people had responded with praise to the Lord and waved their palms towards the altar. At this moment there was likely to be a natural pause in the ceremony before the bringing of the special offerings.

This view has certain points in favor of it. It would seem more natural for Jesus to make His allusion while the actual rite of water pouring was being executed. Meyer, however, says (ad loc.): "As the eighth day (the 22d Tisri) was reckoned along with the seven

feast days proper, according to Lev. 23,35.36.39; Num. 29,35; Neh. 8,18, as according to Succah, f.48,1, the last day of the feast is the eighth, it is clear that John meant this day, and not the seventh (Theophylact, Buxtorf, Bengel, Reland, Paulus, Ammon), especially as in later times it was usual generally to speak of the eight days' Feast of Tabernacles (2 Macc. 10,6; Antiq. iii,3,10,4; Gem. Eruvin. 40,2; Midr. Cohel. 118,3). In keeping with this is the very free translation תְּסִימָה (termination of the feast), which the LXX. give for the name of the 8th day, אַתְּסִימָה (Lev.23,36; Num. 29,35<sup>15</sup> Neh. 8,18)".

After considering the arguments for both sides, to my mind the latter view is correct, namely that the "last" day was the eighth day. It is true that the Scriptures and the Talmud state that the Feast of Tabernacles and the eighth day were distinct. To the Jews, however, this time of the season was naturally eight days of continuous celebration and the popular mind had therefore combined these two festivals into one. That it had become customary to think of these two as one festival is clearly shown by the references in Meyer's quotation which speak of an eight days' celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. Gradually that eighth day of solemn assembly became known as the "last", the "great" day of the Feast, because on that day the people moved out of the booths into their homes, or as Philo remarks (De Septenario, ii, p.298), because this day denoted the end of the yearly feasts collectively, i.e. of the great feasts, not of all. The LXX translators undoubtedly considered the eighth day the "last" day of the Feast, for they translated the Hebrew אַתְּסִימָה (solemn assembly) as תְּסִימָה, "termination".

According to all evidence, then, the people had come to think of the eighth day as the last day of the Feast, and John is

certainly speaking in a popular tone when he says: "In the last day, that great day of the feast".

This view fits very well into the circumstances of Jn. 7. For seven days the people had attended the services and had witnessed the daily ceremony of the "pouring of water". Now on the eighth day, when practically the same service took place with omission of the libation, they would certainly feel the absence of that ceremony which for them had such a deep spiritual significance. It was surely then at a psychological moment if at the point of the service, when during the preceding days the "pouring of water" had taken place, Jesus directed the attention of the people to Himself, the fulfillment of that typical rite, and called out: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink".

No matter which view we choose, it is plain that Jesus is alluding to the ceremony of the libation. Weiss (ad loc.) objects that the ceremony had nothing to do with "drink". This objection does not hold, however, for this ceremony also referred to the striking of the rock in the wilderness, as the dwelling in tabernacles represented the life of the Jews in the desert of old.

The other passage in John's Gospel which demands our attention here is Jn. 8,12: "I am the light of the world". Did Jesus have any external motive for uttering these words? Some say that He might have spoken these words at the time sunrise or sunset. This, however, is too early and too late in the day, and Jesus does not present Himself here as the Antitype of the sun, as in Jn. 9,5.

Others have suggested that Jesus might have spoken these <sup>words</sup> on the occasion of the reading of the Scripture lesson, Is. 42, 6 ("Light of the Gentiles"). Against this we would say with Schaff-Lange (ad loc) "that the reading of Scriptures lessons belonged to

the synagogues, not to the temple; ~~not~~ even the temple-synagogue which Vitringa adduces, was not in the temple itself (Lücke, p.283)". From v.20 we learn that Jesus was in the temple.

Others have referred the words of Jesus to the torch-feast or the illumination at the Feast of Tabernacles. The great golden candelabra in the court of the women were lit on the evening of the first day of the festival, and they spread their light over all Jerusalem, while the men performed a torchlight dance with music and singing before the candelabra. (Cf. Winer, Laubhüttenfest). According to the Maimonides this ceremony also took place on the other evenings of the feast, but that does not affect the situation. Jesus undoubtedly spoke the words after the Feast of Tabernacles. But the exhausted lamps in the court of the women or the treasury-hall would provide sufficient motive for the words of Jesus. They would give Christ occasion to speak of Himself as the true and only Light of the world. Those lights had illuminated Jerusalem only a short time, but His followers would always have light.

Jesus "may also have had reference to a ceremony on the day after the official close of the festival, the 'feast of joy for the Law'. On that day all the sacred books were taken out of the chest where they were commonly kept, and a lighted candle was put in their place, in allusion to Prov. 6,23 or Ps. 119,105" (Kretzmann, Pop.Com. N.T., ad loc.).

The typical meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles was the ingathering of the earth's nations to the Christ. Hence it is also called the Feast of Ingathering in the Old Testament. Rev.7,9,10 is therefore an allusion to the final fulfillment of this type: "All nations before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands".

### The Day of Atonement.

The culmination and crown of the sacrificial worship in the Old Testament took place just before the Feast of Tabernacles on the Day of Atonement, observed on the 10th of Tisri. The principal details of this festival are given in Lev. 16,23; 16, 26-32; Num. 29,<sup>7-11;</sup>7-1 Ex. 30,10. This was the day on which the scape-goat, typically laden with the sins of the people, was sent into the wilderness.

Nowhere in the Gospels do we find any direct mention of this festival. Luke refers to it, Acts 27,9, where he speaks of the "fast". The Day of Atonement became known as the "fast", because contrary to the custom of other feasts the people were to prepare for this festival by fasting and "afflicting their souls" (Lev. 17,31). This day was to be for the Jews a "Sabbath of Sabbatism", as Edersheim literally translates Lev. 17,31.

The most marked reference in the New Testament to this <sup>great</sup> festival is found Hebr. 9,1-13; 9,24-28. The author of Hebrews is contrasting the Old Testament and the New Testament. He shows how weak and incomplete the old covenant was in comparison with the new covenant. Among other things he picks out the Day of Atonement to bring out his point. The High Priest once ~~every~~ year had to enter <sup>the</sup> Holy of Holies to "offer gifts and sacrifices --- which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, impose<sup>ed</sup> on them until the time of reformation" (v.9.10.). In the course of time the rabbinical authorities had added all kinds of minutely detailed "ordinances" to the service on the Day of Atonement. The High Priest, for example, had to observe all kinds of "washings". During the course of the day he had to wash his hands and feet ten times and bathe himself five times. To get the real force of the

holy writers comparison we should have to give a complete account of the liturgy and ceremonies for the festival, but this would lead us too far. For a complete description of the service and its rites see Edersheim, "The Temple".

Hebr. 9,13 a reference is made to the "ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean". This is an allusion to a certain custom connected with the festival. Great care was taken that the High Priest might not become defiled for his important annual duty. Therefore seven days before the Day of Atonement he left his own home in Jerusalem and dwelt in the chambers of the temple. To make his levitical purity doubly sure, on the third and seventh days of the week he was sprinkled with the blood of a red heifer as a safeguard in case he had unwittingly defiled himself during the week by a dead body. This is undoubtedly what Hebr. 9,13 refers to.

#### The New Moons.

Of all the festival days among the Jews the new moons <sup>-pass</sup> perhaps left the deepest impression upon their religious life. Whether the religion of the people was at a high or low standard, they couldn't help but be mindful of the regular recurrence of the new moons. The new moons marked the beginning of the month, and the day of the new moon, being the commencement of a natural division of time, was observed as a holy day. Watchmen stationed on the heights about Jerusalem informed the Sanhedrin when the new moon had appeared, and as soon as the Sanhedrin pronounced the words: "it is sanctified", the day became effective. The new moon of the seventh month marked the beginning of the seventh recurrence of a fixed portion of time

and consequently fell under the Sabbath law. After the exile this day assumed the character of a new year's festival.

Also in New Testament times the new moon was observed. In fact this celebration had become so fixed in the minds of the Jews that Paul makes special mention of the "new moons" when he admonishes the Colossians concerning Christian freedom from the Old Testament ceremonial laws. It is never stated that Jesus went to Jerusalem for the new moon, but this was not required. The day was observed in the synagogues throughout the country.

One of the ceremonies which took place on the new moon was the blowing of trumpets (Num. 10,10). According to the Maimonides the blowing of trumpets meant a calling to repentance (Moreh Nev.iii, c. 43). "The commentator of Maimonides makes use of the following words to denote the meaning of the blowing of the trumpets: 'Rouse ye, rouse ye from your slumbers; awake, awake from your sleep, you who mind vanity, for slumber most heavy has fallen upon you. Take it to heart, before Whom you are to give an account in the judgment'. May not such a formula also have been used anciently in the synagogue; and may not the remembrance of it have been present to the mind of the apostle(Paul), when he wrote; 'Wherefore, it is said, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light', Eph. 5,14". (Edersheim, The Temple, under "New Moons").

## Two Post-Mosaic Festivals.

### A. The Feast of Purim-

The Feast of Purim or Lots is one of those festivals which found its place in Jewish heortology at a later date. It fell on the 14th and 15th of Adar (March) and commemorated the deliverance of the Jews by Esther from Haman, who in B.C. 473 had plotted their extermination throughout the Persian empire.

This festival is mentioned only once in the New Testament, Jn. 5,1, and it is disputed whether this place refers to the Purim. The passage reads: "After this there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem". Different views which have been held as to which festival is here meant are:

- 1) The Passover- Irenaeus, Luther, Grotius, Hengstenberg, Lightfoot, Hastings;
- 2) Pentecost- Cyril, Chrysostom, Bengel, Calvin;
- 3) Feast of Tabernacles- Cocceius, Ewald;
- 4) Feast of Dedication- Petavius;
- 5) Purim- Keppler (who first suggested the view), d'Outrein, Hug, Olshausen, Wieseler, Krabbe, Anger, Lange, Maier, Meyer;
- 6) A feast which cannot be determined- Lücke, De Wette, Luthardt, Tholuck.

This reveals a great divergency of opinion, but after careful consideration the field narrows down to two possibilities: the Passover or the Purim. As is shown by the fact that we include this festival in this thesis, we take it that Jn. 5,1 refers to the Purim.

The arguments usually adduced against the Purim and in favor of the Passover are the following:

1) The Purim was no temple feast and did not require a journey to Jerusalem. Christ, however, may have gone to this festival like He attended other festivals (Jn. 7,2; 10,22), without legal obligation, simply because He wanted to.

2) Hastings: "Christ would naturally go up for the Passover in the following month". It is true that Jesus went to Jerusalem one month later, but there was nothing to keep Him from going to the Purim also.

3) The Purim was never celebrated as a "Sabbath", v.9. This Sabbath, however, may have taken place before or after the feast.

4) The Cod. Sinait. reads  $\gamma \dot{\iota} \rho \rho \tau \eta$  (with the article) and Hengstenberg takes this to point to the Passover. In the first place, however, this reading probably arose through the effort to make this feast the chief feast of the Jews, the Passover. Then even if the Cod. Sinait. is correct in this reading, the Jews really often considered the Purim the feast of the Jews, because it was for them a festival of triumph over the Gentiles.

The points which persuade us to interpret Jn. 5,1 of the Purim follow:

1) The Passover seems out of the question, because John distinctly mentions three other Passover festivals which Jesus attended, Jn. 2,13; 6,4; 12,1. If the Lord attended four Passovers, then His ministry lasted longer than is universally accepted.

2) There was no other feast between December (Jn. 4,35; "four months to harvest") and the Passover (which Jn. 6,4 is describe<sup>ed</sup> as being "nigh at hand"). The Feast of Dedication fell in December, bu<sup>t</sup> it is referred to Jn. 10,22 by its real name, and not as "a feast of

the Jews".

3) When John speaks of the great feasts, he names them. This one is not named, and we would consequently judge that it was not one of the major festivals.

4) All that is related in the following chapters might easily have taken place in one month.

For the given we accept that John refers to the Purim and not to any other festival Jn. 5,1. The question does not decide any matter of doctrine, but is helpful in determining the chronology of events in Christ's life.

#### B. The Feast of Dedication -

Only once in passing does the New Testament allude to the Feast of Dedication, Jn. 10,22. It shows us, however, that the Lord took part in this festival and sanctioned the custom of observing this festival every year. It took place on the 25th of Chislev (December) and celebrated the re-consecration of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus (1Maac. 4,57-59; 2 Macc. 10,6) in 165 B.C. after it had been defiled and desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. The feast lasted eight days and its service was very much like that of the Feast of Tabernacles. Josephus calls it the "Feast of lights".

This ends our treatise. It does not claim to be an exhaustive<sup>st-</sup> treatment of the topic, but merely aims to show how impossible it would be to interpret the New Testament text without a knowledge of the old Jewish festivals

Edersheim, The Temple, furnishes most of the material used in this thesis, and ~~1/3~~ the results of his research have often been embodied in the text without indication of this to eliminate a too frequent interruption of the text.