

THE LATTER RAIN & SPRING FEASTS

As we have seen in lessons 6 and 7, in Palestine the seasonal rains were critical for prosperity and their regularity was seen as God's covenant blessing upon His people. And the latter rainfalls of April not only assured a copious harvest, but were connected to the spring feasts that God ordained for His people. After all, how can you celebrate the harvest festivals God commanded if the latter rains failed? Here is a table of the spring feasts:

NAME	OT TEXTS	OT TIME	MODERN EQUIVALENT	DESCRIPTION
Passover	Exo. 12:1-14 Lev. 23:5 Num. 9:1-14; 28:16 Deu. 16:1-3a, 4b-7	1st month (Abib) 14	March-April	Slaying and eating an unmarred, male, year-old lamb (from the sheep or goats) together with bitter herbs and bread without yeast, in every household.
Unleavened Bread	Exo. 12:15-20; 13:3-10; 23:15; 34:18 Lev. 23:6-8 Num. 28:17-25 Deu. 16:3b, 4a, 8	1st month (Abib) 15-21	March-April	Eating bread made without yeast; holding several assemblies; making designated offerings.
First Fruits	Lev. 23:9-14	1st month (Abib) 16	March-April	Presenting a sheaf of the first of the barley harvest as a wave offering; making a burnt offering and a grain offering.
Weeks (Pentecost, Harvest)	Exo. 23:16a; 34:22a; Lev. 23:15-21 Num. 28:26-31 Deu. 16:9-12	3rd month (Sivan) 6	May-June	A festival of joy; mandatory and voluntary offerings, including the first fruits of the wheat harvest.

PURPOSE

Passover	Remember Israel's deliverance from cruel Egyptian slavery	Mat. 26:17; Mk. 14:12-26; John 2:13; 11:55; 1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:28
Unleavened Bread	Remember how the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt in a hurry	Mk. 14:1; Acts 12:3; 1 Cor. 5:6-8
First Fruits	Recognize the Lord's blessing in the land	Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:20-23
Weeks (Pentecost, Harvest)	Show joy and gratitude for the Lord's blessing of harvest (plenty of groceries!)	Acts 2:1-4; 20:16; 1 Cor. 16:8

NT TEXTS

One can easily conclude how important the latter rains were to the ancient Israelites and how intimately they were identified with the spring harvests and the required feasts to express gratitude and joy to God as provider. The latter rainfalls have a spiritual application. If there is going to be a harvest of *the earth* (Rev. 14:15), then a "latter rain" of the Holy Spirit must prepare for that harvest.

HOW CAN I RECEIVE THE LATTER RAIN?

In the spiritual realm, the time between the early rain (when you began your journey with Christ) and the latter rain (when God's Spirit finalizes you [seals] as a guaranteed candidate for heaven) is where development occurs, where the lengthy "racecourse" of the Christian life is played out (Heb. 12:1, 2; Acts 20:24; 1 Cor. 9:24-26; Gal. 2:2; 5:7; Phil. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:7).

Q: How can I receive the latter rain?

A: Focus on growing in Christ since your early rain.

A. Beginning your journey with Christ was your starting point and the Spirit began a work of reformation in you. This early rain was the gospel sown in you by the Spirit (Mat. 13:8, 23, 37, 38; John 3:4-8). See lesson 6.
B. Planted seeds develop and ripen. Here's what to do to develop and ripen during your journey in preparation for receiving the latter rain:

- 1 Love God with all your heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:5)
- 2 Love not only God, but others (1 John 4:19-21)
- 3 Shun worldliness (1 John 2:15-17)
- 4 Be resolute in seeking God in humility and earnestness (2 Chron. 7:14; Micah 6:8)
- 5 Pray earnestly every day (Luke 11:9-13; 1 Thes. 5:17)
- 6 Be a witness for God (Mat. 5:13-16; Acts 1:8; Mat. 25:34, 40).
- 7 Ask daily for the Spirit to live in you (Mark 1:8; Mat. 25:1-13)

These points are not ritual formulas, but spiritual disciplines that take practice. God does not desire robotic, spiritless routines, but natural strivings to love and serve Him; and He will make up for our inconsistencies. Do not fall victim to religiosity and formalism, but ask God for warmth, love, and an organic relationship with Him. He promises to be with you every step of the way in your spiritual journey. Do these things in sincerity and you will receive the latter rain of the Holy Spirit.