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## **The Liturgy of the Old Testament: Its Festivals, Order, Purpose, and Typology**

**Robert D. Macina**

### **I. Introduction**

The New Testament Scriptures bear witness to the liturgy<sup>1</sup> of the Old Testament, including ancient Israel's festivals. Luke 1:5–23 portrays one of the parts of the daily service at which Zechariah the priest entered the holy place to burn incense in the temple. Hebrews 9:6 and 10:11 testify to the liturgy that the priests conducted every morning and evening. The New Testament references the Sabbath dozens of times, with one of the clearest examples in Colossians 2:16. This same passage also speaks of the festivals at the first of every month and the ones that occurred at specific times once per year. Each of the four Gospels mentions the Passover (Matt 26:2, 17–19; Mark 14:1, 12, 14, 16; Luke 2:41; 22:1, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15; John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14), while Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:1, and Luke 22:1, 7 relate the Festival of Unleavened Bread to the Passover. Romans 11:16 makes mention of the Firstfruits in the Old Testament. The Festival of Harvest, also called the Festival of Weeks, became known as Pentecost in Acts 2:1; 20:16; and 1 Corinthians 16:8. Revelation 8:2, 6, 13 could be understood as a fulfillment of ancient Israel's Festival of Trumpets. Hebrews 9:7 and 13:11 speak of the Day of Atonement. John 7:2 exclusively refers to the Festival of Tabernacles.

Christians study these readings, yet are often unaware of their greater significance and background in the Old Testament. Those who focus almost exclusively on the New Testament may fail to comprehend the broader biblical context of these passages, especially with regard to the liturgy of the Old Testament.

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<sup>1</sup> This article uses *liturgy* interchangeably with *divine service*. In the church today, people sometimes limit the definition of liturgy to the written order of service. However, in the Greek version of both the Old Testament and the New Testament the term *liturgy* frequently refers to the ritual acts that comprise the divine service. Moreover, the liturgy in the Old Testament is different from that of the New Testament. While the ritual acts in the divine service today always consist of spoken words, in the Old Testament the priests enacted most of the liturgy without speaking anything. For a thorough analysis of the meaning of *liturgy* in the Scriptures, see Klaus Hess, “*latreuo, leitourgeo*,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 3:459–553; and H. Strathmann, “*latreuo, latreia*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 4:58–65.

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Robert D. Macina is the pastor of Risen Christ Lutheran Church, Arvada, Colorado. He can be contacted at [koinonoi@juno.com](mailto:koinonoi@juno.com).

Christians can have a greater appreciation of the divine service in ancient Israel by more closely examining the ritual sections in the Pentateuch. This study aims to help the reader achieve a deeper comprehension of how God served his Old Testament people through the liturgy and festivals that he instituted for them.

It is not uncommon for students of the Bible to be perplexed as they study the ritual portions of the Old Testament. To overcome this challenge, a means of interpretation should be employed that takes into consideration the ritual nature of what the Scripture portrays. Although good exegesis ascertains the sense of the biblical text by employing grammatical and linguistic analyses, a hermeneutic that focuses only on the meaning of words and grammatical construction may be insufficient to determine how the rituals in ancient Israel functioned and what God accomplished through them. When studying ritual texts, the reader can build on the foundation of sound exegesis while also utilizing ritual analysis<sup>2</sup> to comprehend the order and purpose of the acts portrayed therein. Moreover, this approach helps the reader to view the divine service in the Old Testament from a systemic perspective which comprehends every component as part of an organic unit. This mode of interpreting the ritual texts in the Old Testament will produce a more satisfying result for students of the Bible. Thus, the current study employs this approach.

## II. The Daily Divine Service

### *Divine Institution of the Daily Divine Service*

The daily rites that the LORD<sup>3</sup> instituted through Moses on Mount Sinai form the basis for the entire divine service in the Pentateuch (Exod 29:38–46). The priests in ancient Israel performed the daily liturgy each morning and evening with all the other occasional services added to it. The weekly, monthly, and several yearly services were never enacted apart from the daily rites. Therefore, the LORD

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<sup>2</sup> For a broader explanation of ritual analysis and its use for interpreting ritual texts in the Scriptures, see John Kleinig, *Leviticus*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 20–24; and Robert D. Macina, *The LORD's Service: A Ritual Analysis of the Order, Function, and Purpose of the Daily Divine Service in the Pentateuch* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 19–21. Anthropological perspectives of ritual analysis are found in Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966); Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960); Ronald L. Grimes, *Ritual Criticism: Case Studies in Its Practice, Essays on Its Theory* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> In this study, “LORD” and “YHWH” designate the divine name, יהוה.

instituted the daily divine service as the foundation upon which all the other periodic services were built and into which they were incorporated.<sup>4</sup>

*Practical Order of the Daily Liturgy*

The daily liturgy consisted of seven basic rites enacted each morning as the sun was rising and each evening at twilight after the sun had gone over the horizon before dark. Though the various ritual activities within each rite slightly varied between the morning and the evening, they were essentially the same. The service includes seven rites: the maintenance of the altar fire, the presentation of materials, the manipulation of blood, the offering of incense, the burning of offerings on the outer altar, the blessing announced by the priest, and eating the most holy food.

The fire rite in the morning consisted of five ritual activities. First, the priests washed their hands and feet with water from the font in the courtyard (Exod 30:17–21). Second, they vested with their sacred vestments (Exod 28:1–43). Third, the priests removed the previous day's ashes from the altar for burnt offering in the courtyard and collected some of the remaining live coals for later use on the altar for incense in the holy place. Fourth, they added new wood to the burning coals on the altar for burnt offering. Finally, the priests took off their vestments, put on common clothes, and carried the ashes outside the camp (Lev 6:8–15).

The morning presentation rite involved another five ritual acts. The priests washed their hands and feet again with water from the font; then they donned their sacred vestments again. Next, they inspected a yearling male lamb to make sure it did not have any deformities or blemishes, presented it before the outer altar, and placed a hand on the head of the lamb. After this, the priests presented flour mixed with olive oil, dashed with salt, with a small pile of frankincense on top, as well as wine for the drink offering. Lastly, the high priest presented half of his daily bread offering (Exod 29:4, 10–11; Lev 1:3; 8:1–4; 9:5).

The blood rite began with the slaying of the lamb on the north side of the outer altar, catching its blood in bowls, and presenting the blood in front of the altar. Next, the priests splashed the blood on the four sides of the altar for burnt offering. They flayed the lamb and slaughtered it into its sections. They then washed the lamb's entrails and legs, placing them with the head, fat, and other pieces of the lamb. The final act of the blood rite was the priests' salting all of the parts of the lamb (Exod 29:16; Lev 1:5, 11; 3:2, 8, 13; 8:19; 9:18).

The centermost rite during the daily service was the incense rite. The priests washed their hands and feet with water from the font, and the high priest put on the ornate vestments to enter the holy place. Then, the priests removed the ashes from

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis of ancient Israel's daily service, see Macina, *LORD's Service*.

the altar for incense and added the new burning coals that had been previously removed from the outer altar during the fire rite. They tended the lamps, adding oil, trimming wicks, and preparing them to be lit in the evening service. The high priest burned the spiced, finely ground incense on the inner altar (Exod 27:20–21; 30:1–10, 34–38; Lev 24:1–4). After the priests completed the incense rite, they exited the enclosed sanctuary.<sup>5</sup>

The burning rite consisted of four ritual activities. The priests washed their hands and feet again from the font. The high priest continued to wear his ornate vestments at the altar for burnt offering. The priests burned the lamb on the outer altar together with a handful of the cereal offering of flour mixed with oil, salt, and all of the frankincense, as well as half of the high priest's bread offering in the morning and the other half in the evening. Finally, they poured out the wine as a drink offering on the outside base of the altar in the courtyard (Exod 29:38–41; Lev 6:8–15; Num 28:3–8).<sup>6</sup>

The blessing rite involved two acts. The regular priests sounded silver trumpets over the burnt offering. At the same time, the high priest announced the Aaronic benediction at the front of the altar (Lev 23:23–25; Num 6:22–27; 10:1–10).

The service concluded with the meal rite and its two ritual activities. First, the priests baked the most holy bread from the cereal offering and ate it in the courtyard of the sanctuary (Lev 6:14–18). Finally, they unvested.

The liturgy in the evening was essentially the same as the morning, but there are a few noteworthy alterations. In the fire rite, the ashes were not removed, so the priests did not need to divest so as to carry the ashes outside the camp (Lev 6:9). They simply added more wood to the fire on the outer altar. At the presentation rite for the evening, the priests were still washed and vested from the fire rite, so they did not do these again. The evening incense rite was different from the morning, only in that the lamps were lit instead of tended (Exod 27:21; 30:7–8; Lev 24:1–4). Everything else was the same as in the morning liturgy.

#### *Theological Purpose of the Daily Divine Service*

YHWH established these seven rites with all of their ritual activities so that he could accomplish his purposes through them. It is inaccurate to interpret these acts as something that the Israelites were doing for the benefit of God. On the contrary,

<sup>5</sup> See Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985; repr., 1995) for a general analysis of the furnishings and rites performed inside the tabernacle.

<sup>6</sup> See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991); and *Numbers*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) for overviews of the ritual activities related to the altar for burnt offerings in the courtyard.

God served his people through all of the enactments of the liturgy that he instituted for their benefit.<sup>7</sup>

In the fire rite, the LORD was preventing the divine fire from being extinguished. At the inaugural service, the fire of God came out from the holy of holies and consumed the offerings on the altar for burnt offering (Lev 9:24). The LORD commanded the priests never to let this divine fire go out so that his presence in it would not depart from the sanctuary. Thus, the offerings burned up with this fire would continue to be acceptable to God (Lev 6:13).<sup>8</sup>

In the presentation rite, as with the fire rite, the LORD washed the hands and feet of the priests with holy water to purify their hands to touch holy and most holy things, as well as for them to walk on holy ground. The LORD vested the priests with the sacred vestments to cover them with his own holiness as they served in his presence. Most important, the LORD both supplied the materials and accepted the Israelites and priests as they presented the offerings before him.<sup>9</sup>

In the blood rite, the LORD made atonement for the sins and defilement of the entire community of Israel as the blood splashed against the sides of the altar. Through the atonement with blood, God purified his people.<sup>10</sup>

During the incense rite, the LORD washed and vested the high priest to bear Israel into the presence of God both on his shoulders and upon his heart, as well as to bear their judgment both upon his heart and upon his head through the ornate vestments. By the lighting of the lamps, YHWH's divine light shone in the midst of Israel throughout the night. In the burning of fragrant incense in the holy place, the LORD accepted the Israelites borne into his presence by the high priest while also sanctifying the high priest and all Israel with him through the most holy incense burned on the inner altar.<sup>11</sup>

During the burning rite, the LORD was set at rest to accept the offerings of the community of Israel as they burned on the altar. He sanctified them with the fragrant incense that followed the high priest out of the holy place and that intermingled with the most holy smoke of the burnt offering. He revealed his divine presence among the Israelites in the smoke wafting from the altar in the courtyard.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1974) for a discussion of the effectiveness of ritual acts in the Old Testament.

<sup>8</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 82–84.

<sup>9</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 100–101.

<sup>10</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 113–120. See also Angel Manuel Rodriguez, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 137–141.

<sup>12</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 153–158.

In the blessing rite, the presence of the royal king was announced through the sounding of the silver trumpets. The Israelites were blessed by God's presence as his name, YHWH, was both seen on the diadem of the high priest's head and spoken upon the people through the Aaronic benediction.<sup>13</sup>

During the meal rite, the LORD fed his priests like courtiers in a royal palace eating from the table of their king. However, this meal was far better than that of an earthly king, for in it YHWH reconsecrated his priests as they ate the most holy food from the cereal offering so that they could continue to serve in his presence at the sanctuary.<sup>14</sup>

#### *Typology of the Daily Divine Service*

The ritual acts of the daily service and all of the liturgy in the Old Testament pointed to the coming Messiah and were fulfilled by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The washing and vesting typified Christ's Baptism, in which he was washed to fulfill righteousness and clothed with the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:13–17). The divine fire foreshadowed Christ's Baptism of us with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11). The presentation of the lamb together with bread and wine indicated that Jesus was revealed as the Lamb of God (John 1:29), who gives his body in bread and his blood in wine for us Christians to eat and drink (Matt 26:26–28). The blood shed from the lamb and splashed on the altar pointed to Christ's sacrifice of atonement by which he paid God the Father for the sins of the world (1 John 2:1–2). The high priest in his ornate vestments prefigured the resurrected Christ who has entered into the heavenly sanctuary to intercede on our behalf (Heb 4:14–16). The burning lamps in the holy place foreshadowed Christ's presence by faith in the hearts of the redeemed. The smoke of fragrant incense denoted Christ's works of prayer to and love for God within his people (2 Cor 2:14–16). The smoke of the lamb, the cereal/bread with salt and frankincense, and the wine typified Christ's transfiguration and ascension into heaven to prepare a place for God's holy people at the eternal marriage feast (Matt 17:1–5; John 14:2–3; 17:24; Rev 19:7–9). The sounding of the trumpets and the proclamation of the benediction point to God's acceptance of Christ's work of redemption by his life, death, resurrection, and

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<sup>13</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 164–167. See also Christopher W. Mitchell, *The Meaning of brk "To Bless" in the Old Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987). With the exception of the spoken Aaronic benediction and the sound of the bells on the robe of the high priest, the divine service that the LORD first instituted in the Pentateuch was mostly silent. It was primarily a series of ritual acts. The Levitical choir was later added to sing God's word in the form of psalms. See John W. Kleinig, *The Lord's Song: The Basis, Function, and Significance of Choral Music in Chronicles* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993). See also Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). A service mostly consisting of unspoken ritual acts seems strange for New Testament Christians.

<sup>14</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 174–176.



ascension as well as his blessing of all who have faith in Christ (Eph 2:6–10). The eating of the most holy food by the priests in the sanctuary foreshadows the resurrection and ascension of Christians to feast at Christ's eternal banquet in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven (Rev 4–5; 19:1–9). With the coming of Christ two millennia ago, all of the rites and ritual activities of the Old Testament were fulfilled and no longer needed. Now, the sacrificed body and the poured-out blood of the incarnate Christ are received in the liturgy of the New Testament (Luke 22:20).<sup>15</sup>

### III. The Sabbath Day

#### *Divine Institution of the Sabbath Day Liturgy*

The LORD instituted the divine service to be performed once per week on the Sabbath day (Lev 23:3; Num 28:9–10). It differed from the weekday divine service in only two ways. First, the priests offered two additional lambs together with a double amount of cereal offering and drink offering. They most likely offered these additional materials only during the morning rites of the daily divine service on the Sabbath, rather than doubling the burnt, cereal, and drink offerings for the morning and evening rites (Lev 23:3; Num 28:9–10). Second, every Sabbath the priests replaced the bread of the presence together with the pure frankincense that is on each of the two piles of six loaves. They ate the bread in the holy courtyard while the frankincense was burned on the altar (Exod 25:23–30; Lev 24:5–9). These two additional elements of the divine service on the Sabbath affected several of the main rites.

#### *Practical Order of the Sabbath Liturgy*

In the presentation rite, the priests inspected and presented the additional lambs and accompanying materials for the burnt offerings, as well as the twelve loaves for the bread of the presence. In the blood rite, they slew both lambs, splashed their blood on the altar, flayed and slaughtered the lambs, and washed and salted the parts of the animal. In the incense rite, the priests replaced the twelve loaves for the bread of the presence and pure frankincense. There is evidence that the wine for the drink offering was stored at the table for the bread of the presence and, thus, the priests likely replenished the wine at this time (Exod 25:29; Num 4:7). During the burning rite, the priests burned on the altar the extra portions of the lambs and cereal offerings, and they poured out the additional amount of wine on the outside

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<sup>15</sup> Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 9:51–24:53*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 835–838.

of the altar at its base. Furthermore, they smoked up the pure frankincense on the altar for burnt offering during the morning service. The priests ate an extra portion of the most holy food from the cereal offerings and consumed the bread of the presence in the meal rite of the morning service (Lev 24:9).

#### *Theological Purpose of the Sabbath*

The command in the Decalogue to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (see Exod 20:8) chiefly involved the laypeople of Israel not doing any work (Lev 23:3). The Sabbath day for the priests, though, involved an extra amount of labor. Although the priests' work at the sanctuary increased on the Sabbath, the LORD blessed them with an abundance of most holy food on this day of the week. YHWH served them a double portion of his food on the Sabbath day to keep them holy. Moreover, the twofold amount of offerings that the priests enacted on the Sabbath affected the entire community in both the blood rite and the burning rite. The extra amount of blood likely served to atone for the sins of the people more extensively once per week. The additional lambs and accompanying offerings produced more smoke from the altar to sanctify more comprehensively the Israelites, as well as to reveal more fully the presence of the LORD among his people.

#### *Typology of the Sabbath*

Christ perfected the Sabbath day so that Christians would enter into his eternal Sabbath rest by faith in him now and hereafter in the body for eternity (Heb 3–4). Since Christ has fulfilled the Sabbath on our behalf by his rest in the tomb, Christians no longer observe the Sabbath under the Old Testament regulations (Matt 27:57–66; Luke 23:50–56). Rather, our “Sabbath” occurs normally on Sunday—the day of Christ’s resurrection—or any time that Christians gather for the liturgy of God’s word and mysteries of his kingdom (John 20:19).<sup>16</sup> The bread of the presence and the wine foreshadowed the true bread of Christ’s presence and his royal wine in the Lord’s Supper set before God’s saints each “Sabbath.” In the church, the new Israel, God’s holy people rest from their own works to receive Christ’s service to us through the liturgy of the New Testament.

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<sup>16</sup> See also John Kleinig, *Hebrews*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017), 216–218, 508.

#### IV. The First Day of the Month

##### *Divine Institution of the Service for the First of the Month*

YHWH instituted the liturgy to be performed on the first day of each month (Num 28:11–15). The divine service on this occasion consisted of additional offerings that the priests burned on the altar for burnt offering during the morning rites. These offerings were as follows: two young bulls with their accompanying cereal offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil and a drink offering of half a hin of wine; one ram with two-tenths of an ephah for its cereal offering and a third of a hin of wine; and seven yearling male lambs each with a cereal offering of one-tenth of an ephah and one-quarter of a hin of wine. Additionally, the priests offered one male goat as a sin offering. These monthly offerings were over and above the ritual materials for the daily divine service and were only offered during the morning rites on the first day of every month.

##### *Practical Order of the Liturgy for the First of the Month*

The service on the first of the month affected the presentation rite, the blood rite, the burning rite, and the meal rite of the morning service. In the presentation rite, the priests inspected and presented the extra animals and all of the ritual materials before the altar for burnt offering. In the blood rite, they prepared in the prescribed way the animals for the burnt offering and splashed their blood against the sides of the altar in the courtyard. However, the monthly sin offering was different. Blood from sin offerings was not splashed against all the sides of the altar. Instead, the priest dipped his finger in the blood and daubed it on the four horns of the altar; the rest of the blood was poured out on the side of the altar where the wine of the drink offering was poured (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34). Additionally, instead of the entire animal being sectioned and salted in preparation for burning on the altar, the goat for the sin offering was prepared for the priests to eat during the meal rite (Lev 6:24–30). In the burning rite, the priests burned the entire animal for the burnt offering on the altar and poured out all of the wine at its base. However, for the sin offering, they did not smoke up the entire animal but only the fat and perhaps a few parts of the goat's entrails (Lev 7:1–8). In the morning meal rite, the priests cooked and ate the meat from the goat for the sin offering in addition to the bread from the cereal offerings as their most holy food from the LORD (Lev 6:16–18; 7:6–10). These additional offerings significantly enhanced the morning rites for the liturgy on the first day of every month.

*Theological Purpose of the Service on the First of the Month*

The monthly divine service was an occasion for rejoicing in the presence of YHWH at the sanctuary. The inclusion of the sin offering heightened the atonement and functioned as a monthly means of forgiveness and purification from sins for the community of Israel. The abundance of additional burnt offerings produced an extraordinary amount of smoke from the altar, which sanctified the community and enhanced the manifestation of God's presence among his people. The meat that the priests ate from the sin offering increased the LORD's provision for his servants at the sanctuary.

*Typology of the Divine Service on the First Day of the Month*

The priests ate the bread from the cereal offerings together with the body of the sin offering, thereby foreshadowing the body of Christ that is eaten with the bread of the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23–24). They poured out the blood of the sin offering in the same place as the wine from the drink offering, typifying the blood of Christ that is in the wine of Holy Communion (Matt 26:28–29; Mark 14:23–25; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:24). The sin offering prefigured Christ offering his body and blood to pay for the sins of the world. Through these, his people receive forgiveness and sanctification in his most holy meal in the liturgy of the church. Christians do not usually celebrate a special service once per month, as did the ancient Israelites. Still, we rejoice in God's abundant provision and recognize his presence among us through Holy Communion, which historically takes place more than once per month (Acts 20:7).<sup>17</sup>

**V. The Passover***Divine Institution of the Passover*

The LORD established the Passover before the exodus of ancient Israel from Egypt (Exod 12:1–28; Lev 23:4–8; Num 28:16–25). Therefore, the Passover predates its observance in connection with the sanctuary. However, once the tabernacle was constructed and Israel's divine service was instituted, YHWH required its celebration each year at the sanctuary (Deut 16:1–8; 2 Chron 35:11). On the tenth day of the first month, each family selected a lamb to be later offered as a Passover offering. On the fourteenth day, they brought their lamb to the sanctuary to fulfill

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Ap XXIV (XII) 1, in W. H. T. Dau and F. Bente, eds., *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church, German-Latin-English* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 383.

the required ritual activities that the LORD had established at the first Passover in Egypt (Lev 23:4–5; Num 28:16).

*Practical Order of the Passover Liturgy*

The Israelites brought their Passover offerings to the sanctuary during the evening service at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. It was enacted at the presentation rite, the blood rite, and as an extension of the meal rite. Each family presented a lamb before the altar at the sanctuary, and the priests inspected it to make sure it had no blemishes. Next, a Levite, acting on behalf of the family, severed the main neck artery so that its blood would drain into special basins (Num 8:15–19). Then, the priests splashed the blood against the sides of the altar for burnt offering. After doing the ritual acts at the altar,<sup>18</sup> the people took the lamb outside the sanctuary—but not outside the camp/city—to be roasted and eaten. Any leftover part of the animal was incinerated, and none of its bones were broken (Deut 16:1–7). The Passover appears to be a unique sacrifice in contrast to the other offerings that have been mentioned at this point because it was offered in the evening instead of the morning liturgy.

*Theological Purpose of the Passover*

The Israelites' yearly commemoration of the Passover celebrated the preservation of their children and livestock when the LORD struck down all the firstborn from the people and animals of Egypt. The blood of the lamb that was first put on the doorframes of Israelite homes was thereafter dashed on the sides of the altar for burnt offering at the sanctuary. Just as the blood on the doorframes protected Israel from death, the blood on the altar atoned for sin and preserved their lives from God's wrath due to their ritual impurity (Lev 17). Eating the Passover meal in Egypt strengthened the Israelites for their exodus, while eating the meat of the Passover each year empowered them with holy food from the table of the LORD. Every year through the Passover, the LORD purified and sustained the lives of the Israelites. God delivered them from slavery in Egypt so that they would live in freedom and have access to him in the divine service.<sup>19</sup>

*Typology of the Passover*

The Old Testament Passover lamb prefigured Christ as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Just as the Passover lamb in the Old Testament had none of its bones broken,

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<sup>18</sup> The Pentateuch does not explicitly state that any part of the Passover lamb was burned on the altar.

<sup>19</sup> Kleinig, *Hebrews*, 502.

so also the Lamb of God suffered no bone fractures when he was flogged and crucified. The blood of the lamb foreshadows the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross to pay for the sins of all people (John 19:34). The blood on the doorposts of the Israelites protected them from physical death; Christ's blood marks our Christian lives to protect us from spiritual death (Exod 12:13). The blood of the Passover lamb that was splashed on the altar pointed ahead to the blood of Christ that makes payment for our sins in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:11–14). Christ instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal in order to offer Christians the body of the Lamb of God (1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:6). He gives his body to us Christians to eat in the unleavened bread and his blood to drink in the wine as the new Passover (Luke 22:14–20). In it, we celebrate our deliverance from the ultimate Pharaoh, the devil, and his slavery. We rejoice in our exodus from the ultimate Egypt, the fallen world. We follow Christ through the desert wilderness of this life, looking forward to entering the eternal promised land. The Old Testament Passover, the deliverance from slavery, and the exodus from Egypt anticipated the time when the Messiah would fulfill the promises. Now that he has come, we Christians participate in the eschatological kingdom that Jesus inaugurated by his incarnation.<sup>20</sup>

## VI. The Festival of Unleavened Bread

### *Divine Institution of the Festival of Unleavened Bread*

Before the exodus from slavery in Egypt, the LORD instituted the Festival of Unleavened Bread to be observed each year in coordination with the Passover. After the exodus from Egypt, the ancient Israelites were required to eat unleavened bread during the Passover meal on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, as well as over the next seven days to keep the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Exod 12:1–30; 23:15; Lev 23:6–8; Num 28:17–25; Deut 16:3–4, 8).

### *Practical Order of the Liturgy for the Festival of Unleavened Bread*

During each day of the seven-day Festival of Unleavened Bread, the priests presented burnt offerings and a sin offering in the presence of the LORD at the sanctuary. These offerings were identical to the ones presented on the first day of every month; and the priests offered them every day of the feast for seven consecutive days. The order of the ritual acts for these offerings followed the same procedure as the ones for the divine service on the first day of the month. The offerings each day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread were incorporated into the morning rites of the daily divine service (Num 28:19–24).

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<sup>20</sup> Just, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 817–838.

Two of the seven days during the festival were more significant than the others. The LORD summoned the Israelites to appear before him at the sanctuary on the first and last days of the Festival of Unleavened Bread as holy convocations. Since the people performed no work on either of these two days, each was viewed as a kind of Sabbath day of rest. Thus, the lay Israelites refrained from work on the first and last days of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:7–8; Num 28:18, 25).

#### *Theological Purpose of the Festival of Unleavened Bread*

The Israelites commemorated their exodus from Egypt by celebrating the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Exod 13:3–10; Deut 16:1). Following the devastating plagues, the Egyptians practically drove out the Israelites from their land. Yet, God's people did not leave without provisions, possessions, and a large number of livestock. The LORD made the Egyptians willing to give the Israelites anything for which they asked. Thus, the people of Israel plundered Egypt as they left that country, taking large quantities of silver, gold, and clothing. They also took the Egyptians' dough, with which they made unleavened bread. The Festival of Unleavened Bread was a celebration of both their exodus and their plundering of the Egyptians' possessions and food (Exod 12:31–36). More important, YHWH provided for his people by purifying, sanctifying, and blessing them with his gracious presence during this seven-day festival. Since the LORD instituted this festival, the bread was no longer common; the instituting word of God made it holy (Lev 23:6–8; Num 28:17–25). Therefore, the Israelites ate holy food provided by their gracious God at the Festival of Unleavened Bread in joyful celebration (Exod 12:37–42).

#### *Typology of the Festival of Unleavened Bread*

Christ fulfilled the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The transfiguration narrative in Luke's Gospel (9:28–36) says that Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus about his exodus, which he was going to fulfill in Jerusalem. There, Christ bled and died on the cross as the perfect Lamb of God who bears the sins of the world, and he rose from the dead to conquer the supreme pharaoh, Satan, and plunder his domain. Furthermore, the exodus at Jerusalem entails Christ's institution of the Lord's Supper to feed us his body in the holy unleavened bread (Luke 22:1). By faith, Christians have been delivered from the slavery of the devil, participate in Christ's exodus, and eat his holy bread. Our wilderness journey anticipates our own exodus from this life and arrival in heaven to feast with Christ in the new Jerusalem and enjoy eternal Sabbath rest (Rev 19:6–9; 21).

## VII. The Firstfruits and Festival of Weeks

### *Divine Institution of Firstfruits and the Festival of Weeks*

YHWH instituted the presentation of Firstfruits and the Festival of Weeks<sup>21</sup> (Lev 23:9–21; Num 28:26–31; Deut 16:9–12). He commanded the Israelites to offer the first heads of grain on the first Sunday after they were cut.<sup>22</sup> Firstfruits consisted of the Israelites bringing to the sanctuary and elevating before the LORD a cut head of the first grain that was harvested from the barley crop,<sup>23</sup> as well as an offering of a yearling male lamb with its prescribed cereal and drink offerings. This took place in the first month of Abib, which is March/April in our calendar. The LORD instructed his people to count seven weeks up to the day after the seventh Sabbath on the fiftieth day, which is the third month of Sivan or May/June. On that day, the people of Israel presented and elevated before the LORD wheat bread made with yeast (Exod 34:22). The LORD required the priests to offer seven yearling male lambs, one young bull, and two rams as burnt offerings together with each one's prescribed cereal and drink offerings. Additionally, he ordered them to present a male goat as a sin offering and to elevate two yearling lambs as public peace offerings, which was unique to the Festival of Weeks.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the priests elevated offerings before the LORD at the beginning of the barley harvest with the cut heads of the first grain as well as at the beginning of the wheat harvest with the first bread.

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<sup>21</sup> In the New Testament Scriptures, the Festival of Weeks is known as Pentecost (fifty), which refers to the fiftieth day after the presentation of heads of grain as the firstfruits of the harvest (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Cor 16:8).

<sup>22</sup> There has been much debate about exactly when the first grain of the barley harvest was offered. For a thorough analysis of the varying positions, see Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 489, and Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3B (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2056–2063. The elevation of the first grain most likely took place on the Sunday after it was cut and not always in coordination with the Festival of Unleavened Bread every year. Obviously, in the year that Christ was raised from the dead the first grain corresponded with the day after the Sabbath during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. This happened to be the very day that Christ was resurrected. However, since grain ripens according to the weather patterns of each year, it may be that the Firstfruits of the barley harvest did not always happen at the time of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Thus, the Festival of Weeks in the Old Testament was not always fifty days after the first Sunday following Passover, but after the barley harvest was ripe enough to cut heads of grain.

<sup>23</sup> Some translations (NAS, NIV, ESV) designate it the “sheaf” of Firstfruits, but it may not have been the entire stalk with the heads of grain on them. Since the Hebrew term often refers to a measure of grain, it likely means “head of grain.” See William L Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 277.

<sup>24</sup> Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 501.



*Practical Order of the Liturgy for Firstfruits and the Festival of Weeks*

The priests enacted these rites during the morning part of the daily divine service. The presentation and elevation of the additional offerings affected the presentation rite. The priests manipulated the blood from the animal offerings during the morning blood rite. They incinerated the burnt offerings and fat portions from the sin and peace offerings together with the token portion of the accompanying cereal offerings. They poured out the wine for the drink offerings at the base of the altar. The priests feasted on the abundance of food from the added cereal offerings and the meat from the sin and peace offerings during the morning meal rite at the Festival of Weeks (Lev 23:9–21).

The Israelites presented other offerings at the Festival of Weeks in addition to the ones that accompanied the wheat bread offering. Whereas the offerings discussed above were enacted in coordination with the grain *harvest*, these offerings were required in correlation with the fiftieth *day* at the Festival of Weeks.<sup>25</sup> These extra offerings were the same number and kind as the ones for the first day of every month. Therefore, the priests enacted them in the daily morning liturgy the same way as the offerings on the first day of each month, still taking into account the daily and other specific offerings that were conducted on that fiftieth day (Num 28:26–31).

The LORD forbade the Israelites from working on the day they celebrated the Festival of Weeks. Since it was a day of sacred assembly, the Sunday of the Festival of Weeks functioned as a Sabbath day of rest. Significantly, it was the seventh week after the Israelites presented their first grain at the sanctuary. Because they presented the Firstfruits on Sunday, the Festival of Weeks equals a Sabbath of Sundays. Therefore, like the Sabbath of days, the LORD established the Sabbath of weeks as a day of sacred assembly (Lev 23:21; Num 28:26).

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<sup>25</sup> At first, there appears to be a contradiction between Leviticus and Numbers concerning the specific offerings that are listed for the fiftieth day of the Festival of Weeks. Leviticus 23:18 says there were seven yearling male lambs, *one* young bull, and *two* rams, whereas Numbers 28:27 states that the offerings were *two* young bulls, *one* ram, and seven yearling male lambs. Furthermore, Leviticus 23:20 prescribes that two yearling lambs be offered as peace offerings on the fiftieth day of the Festival of Weeks, while Numbers 28 makes no mention of the peace offerings. Upon closer examination, however, there is no contradiction. The offerings in Leviticus 23 are prescribed in relation to the first bread offering of the wheat *harvest* while the ones in Numbers 28 are for the fiftieth *day* of the Festival of Weeks. The offerings mentioned in Leviticus 23 accompany the offering of first bread, whereas the offerings in Numbers 28 are additional offerings that are required for the divine service on that day of the year. Therefore, Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28 refer to different offerings.

*Theological Purpose of Firstfruits and the Festival of Weeks*

During the Festival of Weeks, YHWH blessed the Israelites by sanctifying their harvest and the food made from it. The LORD sanctified the first grain and the rest of the harvest that came after it (Lev 23:10–14). Later, at the beginning of the wheat harvest, the Israelites offered first bread made with yeast through which the LORD sanctified all of their food (Lev 23:15–20). In this way, the LORD provided holy food for their regular meals at home from his holy table, the altar at the sanctuary.<sup>26</sup>

*Typology of Firstfruits and the Festival of Weeks*

Christ fulfilled the Firstfruits and Festival of Weeks as the New Testament testifies. The elevation of the new grain at the beginning of the harvest signified Christ's resurrection from death. He is the "Firstfruits" from among the dead so that we Christians may also share in his resurrection now by faith as we wait for our own resurrection in the flesh on the Last Day (1 Cor 15:20–23; Jas 1:18; Rev 14:4). Just as the Israelites elevated the first grain at the beginning of the barley harvest and the first bread at the beginning of the wheat harvest on Sunday, so now the New Testament Sabbath is Sunday. Each Sunday Christ pours out the Holy Spirit on his people through his word and sacraments to keep us in the firstfruits of his resurrection life. Each Sunday he gives to us the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit through the new bread of his harvest (Rom 8:23). On Pentecost, the fulfilled Festival of Weeks, Christ poured out his Holy Spirit to establish the Christian church. Each Sunday our Lord continues to give us the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). The Firstfruits of the barley harvest looked forward to the messianic fulfillment. The Firstfruits of the wheat harvest anticipated the coming of the Holy Spirit and the spread of the gospel throughout the world. The Festival of Weeks indicated the church age and the harvest of Christ's people in the New Testament era until the last day. The bread made with yeast each year at the Festival of Weeks (Lev 23:17) signified the growth of the church (Acts 2:38–47). The resurrection of Christ and sending of the Holy Spirit fulfilled the Old Testament Firstfruits and Festival of Weeks.<sup>27</sup>

**VIII. The Day of Acclamation***Divine Institution of the Day of Acclamation*

YHWH founded the Day of Acclamation, which took place on the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:23–25; Num 10:1–10; 29:1–6). This was one of the most

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<sup>26</sup> Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 500–502.

<sup>27</sup> Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 506, 508–509.

significant months in the ancient Israelite ritual calendar and involved four major occurrences: the Day of Acclamation, the Day of Atonement, the Festival of Tabernacles, and the Final Assembly. The Day of Acclamation marked the beginning of this important seventh month as a day of rest and sacred assembly with joyful shouts of exultation to the LORD and with the sounding of the silver trumpets and rams' horns.

*Practical Order of the Liturgy for the Day of Acclamation*

Due to the magnitude of this month as the Sabbath month, the priests performed ritual acts in addition to the ones for the first of the month and the daily liturgy. During the morning service, they presented other animals including one young bull, one ram, and seven male lambs as burnt offerings with their prescribed cereal and drink offerings. The priests also offered a male goat as a sin offering. These would have affected the presentation, blood, burning, and meal rites in the morning service similar to the offerings for the Festival of Weeks. Furthermore, they conducted ritual acts during the blessing rite in which they sounded the silver trumpets over the burnt offerings on the altar. The priests likely sounded the silver trumpets more than once, after which the congregation would shout for joy before the LORD. Once the Israelites had settled in the promised land, most likely specific agents were responsible for blowing rams' horns to signal this first day of the Sabbath month throughout the nation. It is imaginable that not only the gathered congregants at the sanctuary but also people in their own territories joined in a joyful shout to YHWH in response to the sounding of the rams' horns. All of the daily, monthly, and additional Sabbath month ritual acts comprised the liturgy on the Day of Acclamation (Lev 23:23–25; Num 10:1–10; 29:1–6).

*Theological Purpose of the Day of Acclamation*

The Day of Acclamation functioned as a day of rest and acclamation to YHWH for his blessings upon the Israelites. The main harvest was completed, and they expressed their joy and thankfulness to the LORD for his bountiful provision of its produce. Moreover, as with the Sabbath of days and the Sabbath of weeks, so this Sabbath of months constituted a day of rest and sacred convocation in which the LORD served his people. Initially, the Israelites heard the sound of heavenly trumpets and horns signaling the presence of God at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16–19; Heb 12:18–21). In like manner, the sound of trumpets and rams' horns on the Day of Acclamation manifested the presence of God among the Israelites. At this

celebration, the people rested from their harvest labors to be served by the LORD. In response, they joyfully acclaimed YHWH as their God.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Typology of the Day of Acclamation*

The Day of Acclamation will be fulfilled with the advent of Christ to judge the world on the last day. On that day, the entire world and all who have ever lived will hear the sound of the great trumpet call of God announcing the presence of Christ. He will send forth his angels to gather his people from all over the earth (Matt 24:30–31). At the last trumpet, in a flash, in the blink of an eye, we Christians will be changed; for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised imperishable (1 Cor 15:51–57). Christ will come down from heaven with resounding acclamation, with the voice of the archangel, with the trumpet call of God; and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then, we who remain alive will ascend together with them in the clouds to meet Christ in the air to live and reign with him for all eternity (1 Thess 4:13–17). On the final Day of Acclamation, we will obtain our eternal Sabbath rest and shout for joy in the celestial liturgy without end.

### **IX. The Day of Atonement**

#### *Divine Institution of the Day of Atonement*

YHWH founded the Day of Atonement for the high priest to enact on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 16; 23:26–32; Num 29:7–11). It was one of the most complex of all of the divine services performed in ancient Israel. The Day of Atonement was the only day out of the entire year in which the LORD atoned for all of the sins of the Israelites and ritually cleansed and reconsecrated the sanctuary. As the utmost day of Sabbath rest in the Sabbath month, YHWH forbade the entire community of Israel from working, eating, drinking, copulating, bathing, and anointing. Only on this day in the entire year, the high priest entered into the most holy place in the sanctuary to carry out the specific rituals at the ark of the testimony.

#### *Practical Order of the Liturgy on the Day of Atonement*

The priests performed the explicit enactments on the Day of Atonement in addition to the ones that the priests performed in the morning liturgy. The offerings for the day itself added one young bull, one ram, and seven yearling male lambs as a burnt offering together with their prescribed cereal offerings and drink offerings, as well as a male goat for a sin offering that was distinct from the one presented for

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<sup>28</sup> Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 503.

the people's atonement (Num 29:7–11). Over and above these, the high priest offered a young bull for his own sin offering and a ram for his burnt offering. From the Israelites, he took two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. The priest presented one of the goats for the people as an offering to the LORD. The other was the scapegoat to be released in the wilderness (Lev 16). Thus, in addition to the two yearling male lambs with their cereal offerings and drink offerings for the daily service, the priests offered fifteen extra animals as well as numerous cereal and drink offerings.

Five of the morning rites were affected by the additional ritual acts prescribed for the Day of Atonement. In the presentation rite, instead of the high priest washing his hands and feet before putting on the ornate vestments, he stripped naked and washed his entire body probably at the font or possibly with water from the font taken inside the holy place. Then he put on linen undergarments, the sacred linen tunic tied with the linen sash, and the linen turban. These plain white linen vestments were distinct from the ornate colorful garments that the high priest wore every day during the liturgy (Lev 16:4). Instead of royal ornate vestments representing the heavenly king, the high priest wore these plain vestments like an angelic representative before the LORD.<sup>29</sup> After donning the linen vestments, the high priest performed the inspection and presentation of all of the animals and materials that the priests offered on the Day of Atonement.

The distinct ritual acts for this unique day affected the blood rite. As usual, the high priest slew all of the animals by slitting their main neck artery so that the regular priests could catch their blood in bowls. The high priest splashed the blood from the burnt offerings on all the sides of the altar and disposed of the blood from that day's sin offering, which involved daubing the horns of the altar and pouring the rest out at its base. After the priests had flayed, slaughtered, and prepared these animals for incineration, they carried out additional ritual activities leading to a comprehensive atonement. First, the high priest slew the bull for his sin offering and the regular priests caught its blood in a bowl (Lev 16:11). Second, on a censer, the high priest took burning coals from the altar and carried finely ground fragrant incense into the most holy place. He put the incense on the coals and produced smoke to conceal the atonement seat above the ark of the testimony so that he would not die in the presence of God (Lev 16:12–13). Third, the high priest came out of the enclosed sanctuary to retrieve the blood from his sin offering. He reentered the most holy place to sprinkle the blood on the front of the atonement seat in addition to seven times in front of it. After this, the high priest came out to the altar of incense, daubed

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<sup>29</sup> See Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 339, as well as Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1016, and Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament 3 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979), 230.

the blood on its four horns, and sprinkled it seven times in front of the veil that separates the most holy place from the outer room (Exod 30:10; Lev 4:3–7; 16:14). Fourth, the high priest came out again to the courtyard and slew the sin offering for the people. He returned to the most holy place the third and final time to sprinkle the blood in the same way as he did with his own sin offering. As with his sin offering, the high priest daubed blood on the horns of the altar of incense and sprinkled blood seven times in front of the veil in the holy place (Lev 16:15; see 4:13–18). Fifth, the high priest emerged from the holy place unto the altar for burnt offering in the courtyard. He mixed the blood from both his and the people's sin offerings that had been taken into the most holy place. The high priest smeared the blood on the four horns of the altar for burnt offering and sprinkled blood on it seven times before pouring out the rest on its base (Lev 16:18–19). Sixth, the high priest brought the scapegoat to the altar, placed both hands on its head, and confessed over it all of the wickedness, rebellion, and sins of the Israelites. In the care of a man appointed for the task, he sent the scapegoat into the wilderness and abandoned it there (Lev 16:20–22). Finally, the high priest entered the holy place, took off the linen vestments, washed his entire body with water again, and put on his ornate vestments (Lev 16:23–24). This concluded the blood rite that the high priest performed in the morning service on the Day of Atonement.<sup>30</sup>

The Day of Atonement affected the incense rite in one way. Since he had just washed his entire body with water after taking off the plain linen garments, the high priest did not need to wash his hands and feet before donning the ornate vestments. After putting on the ornate vestments, the high priest performed the regular incense rite (Lev 16:24–25).

In the burning rite, the high priest smoked up all of the animal offerings on the altar for burnt offering. Most likely, the priests placed the offerings on the altar in this order: the lamb for the daily burnt offering, the burnt offerings for the Day of Atonement, the fat from the sin offering, the burnt offerings for the priests and for the people, the fat from the sin offering of atonement, the cereal offerings, and the drink offerings poured out at the base on the side of the altar. Since the priests fasted on the Day of Atonement, they did not eat any of the cereal offerings. Instead, the priests burned them on the altar (Lev 23:27, 29, 32). Likewise, they did not eat the sin offerings but burned them outside the camp with their meat, hide, and offal (Lev 4:11–12, 21; 6:30). The priests entirely incinerated all of the animals and cereal offerings either on the altar or outside the camp at the ash heap on the Day of Atonement.

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<sup>30</sup> Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 342–345.

Since the priests fasted on the Day of Atonement, they did not cook or eat any of the most holy food from the cereal and sin offerings. Thus, after announcing the benediction, the priests took off their vestments at the conclusion of the morning liturgy.

*Theological Purpose of the Day of Atonement*

The Day of Atonement was significant for ancient Israel in several ways. The LORD initially instituted its ritual activities to make atonement for the priests and people after the two sons of Aaron offered incense with unauthorized fire. The fire of the LORD emanated from the most holy place and destroyed Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10; 16:1–2). In his grace, YHWH provided a safe way for the high priest to enter behind the veil once per year to make atonement for the most holy place, the entire enclosed sanctuary, the altars, the priests, and the people of Israel (Lev 16:3). He instituted the Day of Atonement as a comprehensive purification of the sanctuary and complete forgiveness of all of the sins of the Israelites, since the more frequent offerings only atoned for unintentional sins (Lev 4:13, 22, 27; 5:15, 17–18). The scapegoat comprised an extraordinary function because the priests did not slay it in the presence of the LORD. Rather, the scapegoat carried all of the sins of the Israelites to the wilderness, the place of demons, as a return of sins to their source (Lev 16:20–22, 26–28). Most astounding, the blood that the high priest brought out from the most holy place sanctified everything it contacted. With the exception of the blood mixed with the anointing oil at the priests' ordination and the initial consecration of the sanctuary with its furnishings, blood normally functioned as a means of purification—not sanctification (Exod 29:21; Lev 8:30). Yet, on the Day of Atonement, the blood that the high priest brought into the most holy place served a dual purpose. He brought the blood into the innermost sanctum to purify, to make atonement on the ark of the testimony (Lev 16:16–17). Having come into contact with the holiness of God himself, the high priest brought out the most holy blood with the power to re-sanctify the sanctuary and its furnishings (Lev 16:18–19). Furthermore, just as the LORD sanctified the weekly Sabbath, so he sanctified the entire community of Israel on the Day of Atonement as an extraordinary Sabbath day in the Sabbath month (Lev 16:31). This is heightened by the fact that the morning liturgy on the Day of Atonement did not end with a meal, but with the benediction and the placing of the sanctifying name of YHWH upon the people of Israel (Num 6:22–27). Moreover, the extreme fasting likely commemorates Aaron's refusal to eat the most holy food on the day that the LORD killed his two sons for using unauthorized fire (Lev 10:16–20). On the Day of Atonement, the LORD reminded the Israelites of his judgment against sin and ritual impurity. Yet, at the

same time he provided for their purification and sanctification so that he would continue to reveal his presence among his people and bless them (Lev 16:34).<sup>31</sup>

*Typology of the Day of Atonement*

Imagine the high priest enacting the liturgy on the Day of Atonement, *then* going back into the most holy place to enthrone himself on the ark of the testimony between the angels. Effectively, that is what Christ did! In the Old Testament, the high priest daily served as a mediator between God and the people of Israel, but on the Day of Atonement he mediated in a more extensive way than every other day of the year. Similarly, Christ atoned for the sins of the world by his own blood, which he carried through the veil of his body into the heavenly holy of holies to make permanent and perfect mediation between God and men. Just as the high priest most comprehensively interceded for Israel by entering the most holy place behind the veil with the blood of animals, so also Christ entered into the heavenly holy of holies through his body and with his blood to take his rightful place at the right hand of the Father and intercede for us (Heb 8; 9:1–15; 10:11–12). Furthermore, imagine that the high priest came back out of the most holy place one last time in order to lead his faithful people into the holy of holies in the glorious presence of God. That is what Christ will do for us on the last day! Yet, even now by faith, we have access to the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary through Christ's body and blood (Eph 2:6–7; Heb 12:22–24).

The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament functioned as a day of judgment to pay the penalty for sin and appease God's wrath. As a result, God reckoned the Israelites righteous. Christ fulfilled the Day of Atonement by his payment for all sins on the cross. Christians receive by faith God's pardon and righteousness because Christ endured God's judgment. On the last day, Christ will judge the world and physically lead his people into the glorious presence of God. The death and resurrection of Christ as well as his glorious return are judgments. This is indicated by the similarities between the cosmic events at Christ's death and resurrection and the universal signs that will occur at the end of this world (Matt 27:50–53). The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament typified the judgment of Christ on the cross, the justification of his people, and the final judgment on the last day (Eph 2:6–7; Heb 2:17–18; 4:14–16; 7:23–28; 8:1–6; 9; 10:1–25).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 345–347.

<sup>32</sup> The Hebrew term for the Day of Atonement is actually plural, literally "Day of Atonements." In contrast to the multiple actions of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, the death of Jesus is the once and for all atoning action for all sin.



## X. The Festival of Tabernacles and the Final Assembly

### *Divine Institution of the Festival of Tabernacles and the Final Assembly*

The LORD instituted the Festival of Tabernacles with the Final Assembly (Lev 23:33–43; Num 29:12–38; Deut 16:13–15). Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and lasted until the twenty-first, each day of which the native-born Israelite men resided in tents/tabernacles. During this time, the Israelites celebrated the final ingathering of the crops. They had great joy and gave thanks for YHWH's bountiful provision. The first day of Tabernacles was a sacred convocation on which no one was allowed to work. On this special day of Sabbath rest, the Israelites took choice fruit from trees, palm fronds, leafy branches, and poplars to rejoice before the LORD. Every day from the fifteenth through the twenty-first, they brought offerings that were specific for each day before YHWH at the sanctuary.

### *Practical Order of the Liturgy for the Festival of Tabernacles and the Final Assembly*

In addition to the offerings that the priests presented each day, they brought offerings that were required for the Festival of Tabernacles. On the first day, the priests presented a burnt offering of thirteen young bulls, two rams, and fourteen yearling male lambs, all without defect, with their cereal and drink offerings, as well as a male goat for a sin offering. They offered the same on the second through the seventh days, except each day the number of young bulls decreased. Thus, on the second day the priests offered twelve bulls, the third day eleven, the fourth day ten, the fifth day nine, the sixth day eight, and the seventh day seven bulls (Num 29:13–34). These offerings affected several of the regular morning rites. The priests inspected and presented the offerings for the Festival of Tabernacles during the presentation rite. They splashed the blood of the burnt offerings against the altar, daubed the blood of the sin offerings on the horns of the altar, and poured out the rest of it at the base of the altar during the blood rite. They smoked up the carcass from the burnt offerings, the token portion of the cereal offerings, and the fat from the sin offerings during the burning rite. The priests cooked and ate the remaining portion of the cereal offerings and the meat from the sin offerings in the meal rite. In the context of the morning liturgy, they enacted these additional rituals for the seven-day Festival of Tabernacles.

### *Theological Purpose of the Festival of Tabernacles and the Final Assembly*

In ancient Israel, the Festival of Tabernacles composed a joyful celebration for the final ingathering of the crops and the LORD's provision of them. After the temple was built in Jerusalem, the Israelites assembled for the festival there and lived

in temporary booths near the sanctuary for seven days. YHWH commanded the Israelites to be joyful at this festival because he blessed their harvest and all their labors. The Israelites presented the first grain at the beginning then completed the harvest by gathering the crops into their storehouses/tabernacles. They joyfully celebrated the blessings of the LORD (Num 29:12; Deut 16:13–15).

The Festival of Tabernacles lasted only seven days, the fifteenth through the twenty-first. Yet, the LORD added another day to the end of the festival: a sacred convocation, a Sabbath rest, the Final Assembly. On this day, the Israelites offered one bull, one ram, and seven yearling male lambs together with their cereal and drink offerings, as well as a male goat as a sin offering. They offered these in addition to the regular offerings for the morning rites in the daily divine service. Strictly speaking, this eighth day and its offerings were not part of the Festival of Tabernacles. Instead, it was the final sacred convocation, the last of the special Sabbath days of rest, and the Final Assembly of the ritual calendar (Lev 23:36; Num 29:35–38).

#### *Typology of the Festival of Tabernacles and the Final Assembly*

The Festival of Tabernacles in ancient Israel points to Christ gathering his holy people into paradise on the last day. The choice fruit, palm fronds, leafy branches, and poplars that the Israelites picked in the Old Testament anticipated the restoration of man to paradise, which he lost with the fall into sin in the garden of Eden.<sup>33</sup> Christ gathers his saints into the heavenly tabernacle now by faith, and he will physically gather us there on the last day to dwell together with him for all eternity (Matt 25:31–46; John 14:3; Col 3:1–4; 1 Thess 4:13–18; Rev 3:21; 4–5; 7; 19:1–9).

The eighth day and Final Assembly in the Old Testament typified the eternal day of heaven (John 11:23–26; Rom 6:1–11; Eph 2:6–7; Heb 12:22–24; Rev 21). In the New Testament, the eighth day signifies resurrection, new creation, and eternal life with the triune God. It is the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead and the inauguration of the eschatological eternal day (John 20:1, 19, 26). On that day, Christ's resurrected body became the new creation with which he renews the cosmos to endure eternally (Rom 8:18–22; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; 2 Pet 3:13; Rev 21:1). We Christians come to the divine service most regularly on Sunday, the eighth day, as our sacred convocation, our special Sabbath rest, and our participation in the heavenly assembly of angels, saints, and the triune God (Heb 4:1–11; Rev 4–5). The Final Assembly in ancient Israel foreshadowed the eternal day of heaven and our

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<sup>33</sup> Access to the tree of life was denied to Adam and Eve after they fell into sin (Gen 3:22–24). In eternal paradise, Christians will regain access to and eat from the tree of life (Rev 2:7; 22:2).

joyful celebration as royal sons of our heavenly Father in his beloved Son through the eternal Spirit (Matt 5:9; Luke 6:35; John 12:36; Rom 8:14–15; 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; 4:4–7; Heb 12:5–10; Rev 21:23–25).<sup>34</sup>

### XI. Conclusion

YHWH instituted his divine liturgy for the ancient Israelites after he delivered them from slavery. He brought them out of Egypt so that he would be their gracious God and dwell among them at his sanctuary. Although the Israelites were his covenant people as descendants of Abraham, nonetheless they were sinful and unclean. So how did the holy God live in the midst of people contaminated with ritual impurity without destroying them? He instituted his liturgy for them. Through the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly services, the LORD provided the means to purify the Israelites from their uncleanness and sanctify them to share in his holiness. Through the liturgy, YHWH revealed his gracious presence to his people and blessed them with his divine name. Thus, the LORD established ancient Israel's divine service with a fourfold purpose: to purify them, sanctify them, manifest his presence among them, and bless them. He accomplished these things through the liturgical calendar that he instituted, not for himself but for the benefit of his people in the Old Testament.<sup>35</sup>

Is the liturgy of the Old Testament relevant for the New Testament church? Yes, and no. The liturgy in the New Testament comprises both a discontinuity and a continuance of the service that Christ established for ancient Israel. The priesthood, sanctuary, offerings, and ritual acts in the Old Testament have all been fulfilled with the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. From that perspective, the ritual activities performed by the priests and people in the liturgy of the Old Testament have been discontinued. However, the service that Christ instituted in ancient Israel continues in the New Israel—the church—but with a different ministry, rituals, and sanctuary.<sup>36</sup> Just as he had instituted the priesthood in the Old Testament to enact the liturgy among the Israelites, so also he instituted the holy ministry as stated in the New Testament to conduct the liturgy of the Christian church. On the one hand, Christ fulfilled the divine service that he instituted for ancient Israel. On the other hand, Christ enhanced the liturgy of the church by instituting his word, Baptism, Absolution, and Holy Communion for our purification, sanctification, epiphany of the divine presence, and blessing from the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>34</sup> See Kleinig, *Leviticus*, 492, 504, 509–511; and Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 399, 401–405.

<sup>35</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, 178, 198–200.

<sup>36</sup> Macina, *LORD's Service*, xvi–xvii.