

Sacred Time: Festivals, Feasts, and Fasts That Mark Biblical Events

Festivals include feasts to celebrate fertility, happiness, commitment, births, marriages, or victories. Times of fasting include penance and periods when feasting is forbidden.

Event	Significance and References
Sabbath	The seventh day is a day of rest to honor God and family. No work is permitted. (Ex 20:8–11, Lv 23:1–3, Dt 5:12–15) Christians celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday to honor the Paschal Mystery of Christ's life, death, and resurrection. (Mt 28:1–10, Mk 16:1–8, Lk 24:1–12, Jn 21:1–14)
Trumpets	New moon festival honors forty days of repentance and joy. (Lv 23:23–25, Nm 28:11–15, Am 8:5)
New Year	Rosh Hashanah marks the New Year with prayers and rest. It anticipates the return of the Messiah and is a day of trumpets. (Nm 29:1–6)
Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement	Ten days after the New Year, the Day of Awe marks the end of trumpets and honors the ancestors. Repentance is symbolized by a scapegoat driven into the wilderness. (Lv 16:29, 23:27; Nm 29:7–11) Christians associate the Day of Atonement with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. (Mt 26:28, Mk 14:24, Jn 8:12, Heb 9:11–10:18)
Sabbatical year	Every seven years the land rests, slaves are freed, and all debts are suspended or erased. (Ex 21:2, 23:10–11; Lv 25:1–7; Dt 15:1–6)
Jubilee (fiftieth year)	The seventh sabbatical year is honored with compassion to the poor, the freedom of slaves, erasure of debts, the return of property to its original owner, and resting the land. (Lv 25:8–22, 2 Chr 36:21, Is 61:1–2)
Pilgrimage festivals	The feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, Weeks, Booths (or Tabernacles), and the harvest were marked with pilgrimages to the sanctuary or Temple in Jerusalem (Ex 23:14–17, 34:22–23; Dt 16:16–17)
Feast of Passover or Unleavened Bread	The memorial of the Exodus from Egypt is honored in a seder meal in which prayers and blessings are offered for Jews across the world. (Ex 12:1–28; 34:18,25; Lv 23:4–14; Nm 9:1–14, 28:16–25; Dt 16:1–8; Ez 45:18–24) Jesus memorialized Passover as he offered himself as the bread of life (or the Eucharist). (Mt 26:17–19,26–29; 1 Cor 10:1, 11:23–26; Eph 2:19–20)
Feast of Weeks	The seven weeks of harvest after the blessing of the first sheaf of barley in the rite of Omer during Pentecost (Ex 23:16, 34:22; Lv 23:15; Nm 28:26–31; Dt 16:9–10)
Pentecost	Pentecost concludes seven weeks after the rite of Omer as the first sheaf of grain is offered in thanks for the harvest. The feast of Weeks, or Shavuot, marks fifty days after Passover. (Lv 23:15–22, Nm 28:26–31) Pentecost, for Christians, marks the descent of the Holy Spirit and reveals Christ's Church. (Acts 2:1–11, 20:16; 1 Cor 16:8)
Feast of Tabernacles or Booths	Autumn feast; gathering of the harvest on the fifteenth to the twenty-first days of the seventh month. The ingathering of the harvest marks Sukkoth, when Israel lived in the wilderness. (Lv 23:33–43, Nm 29:12–39, Dt 16:13–17, Ez 45:25, Zec 14:16–19) The Transfiguration of Jesus took place at the feast of Tabernacles (feast of Booths). (Lk 9:33; Jn 7:2,37)
Feast of Shiloh	A version of Tabernacles or Booths during which families made pilgrimages to Shiloh (Jgs 21:19, 1 Sm 1:1–7)
Purim	Holy day that marks the defeat of Haman of Persia by Esther and honors Mordecai's faith. The feast includes drama, fasting, feasting, and prayers for Israel. (Est 9:20–32)
Hanukkah	The dedication of the second temple and the defeat of Antiochus IV (167 BC) by the Maccabean Wars is the mythic source of Hanukkah. The festival includes gift giving, feasting, and celebrating. (1 Mc 4:1–59, 2 Mc 10:1–8, Jn 10:22).