

Present Truth

Dear Readers,

February 2011

“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Colossians 1:2). We can be thankful that God’s grace enables us to be forgiven of our sins. God says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalms 103:12). The Bible also says, “He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). Praise God for His amazing love!

Feast Days

by Lynnford Beachy

The Jewish economy was laden with many ceremonies and types that were very detailed and burdensome in many respects. The central theme of all of these ceremonies was the sanctuary and its services. A study of the sanctuary and the ceremonies surrounding it, including the feast days, yields a wealth of information and instruction for us today. It would do us all good to take time to study the meanings of the different ceremonies and festivals that were common place to the ancient Jewish people.

The sacrifices required in the sanctuary and on feast days pointed forward to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). When Jesus Christ died, “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Matthew 27:51). This symbolized that the continued practices of the earthly sanctuary and its services no longer had any usefulness, for type had met antitype — the shadow had met the reality. After Christ died, the continuation of the earthly sanctuary services and its sacrificial system was a

useless mockery to the death of the Son of God. Jesus said of the Jews, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). After Christ died, God no longer honored the earthly sanctuary with His presence. All services performed therein after that time were a vain ceremony, completely useless for the followers, and displeasing to God.

Concerning another time, but equally applicable after the death of Christ, God said, “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts” (Amos 5:21, 22). After Christ died, the Jewish nation continued their services. I suppose they repaired the veil in the temple, and continued as if nothing had happened, until it was finally destroyed in 70 AD.

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The Setting of the NT Church

The early Christian church had a rough start, but began to grow rapidly. Shortly after the day of Pentecost five thousand were added to the church in Jerusalem alone (Acts 4:4). For the first several years, the apostles mainly evangelized the Jewish people, just as Jesus had instructed them, saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5, 6).

As a result of this evangelism a large number of the early Christians were converts from Judaism. As could be expected, many of them brought with them the ceremonies and rituals they had learned as Jews. When Paul was converted, he became a powerful missionary, mainly to the Gentiles [any non-Jewish person]. His unceasing labor brought many Gentiles into the church who were ignorant about the practices of the Jews. There were among that early church some prominent Jews who insisted that the Gentiles learn and follow the customs of the Jews. This caused quite a stir in the early church, and a council was called to deal with the problem.

We read about this council in the 15th chapter of Acts. Here it says, “Certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren [the Gentiles], and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question” (Acts 15:1, 2). Paul strongly opposed the position of these Pharisees who were trying to force the Gentiles to follow their customs.

Continuing, we read, “There rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). These Pharisees were believers in Jesus Christ but they retained much of their previous lifestyle. They would be similar to what would be called today, “Messianic Jews.”

The Pharisees were a strict sect of Judaism, whom Jesus often rebuked for their hypocrisy, their excessive regulations, and their eagerness to compel others to be bound by their own traditions. (See Luke 11:37-54; Matthew 23:13-39.) When these Pharisees came into the Christian church, many brought these negative character traits with them, and began imposing their traditions upon the Gentile Christians.

There are two things mentioned here that the Pharisees were trying to compel the Gentile believers to do, 1) to be circumcised, 2) to keep the law of Moses. Circumcision was a sign given to Abraham hundreds of years before Moses was born, and is therefore spoken of separately from the law of Moses. The fact that Gentiles are not required to, and even discouraged from, getting circumcised is evident several places in the New Testament (Romans 2:25-29; 1 Corinthians 7:18, 19; Galatians 5:1-4; 6:12-15). Yet, there is another aspect that the Pharisees were urging upon Gentiles, namely, “the law of Moses.” This law was not circumcision but something more. Nor was this law the traditions of the Pharisees that they had added to the law, otherwise it could not be called, “the law of Moses.”

Some have maintained that this “law of Moses” was limited only to the sacrifices prescribed in the law of Moses. Yet, there is no record or indication in the New

Testament that anyone tried to impose the sacrificial system upon Gentiles. There is, however, evidence that other aspects of the law of Moses were promoted, as we will see shortly.

Keep in mind that “the law of Moses” is spoken of distinctly from “the law of God.” It is true that the law of Moses was given to Moses by God, but there were aspects of it that were necessarily temporary, unlike the Law of God. One evidence of the distinction of value placed on these two laws was that the law of God was written by the finger of God on tables of stone and placed inside the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary (Deuteronomy 10:2), and the law of Moses was written with ink on paper and placed on the outside of the Ark of the Covenant (Deuteronomy 31:26). Both the method of writing and placement of the two laws signify the difference between these two laws.

Later in Acts 15 Peter argued against the Pharisees, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10). We learn here that some aspect of the law of Moses was being urged upon the Gentiles and that this was a burden too great for even the Jews to bear.

James gave the final word at the meeting, saying, “Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:19). James was not saying that these are the only requirements to be placed upon Gentiles, but that of those things in the law of Moses that were being pressed upon them, these are the main things they should be concerned with.

Missing from this list are some very significant commands of God, such as, “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” etc. It is obvious that the Ten Commandments were not a matter of discussion at this meeting, for it was taken for granted that these Laws were binding upon all men in all times, as is elsewhere outlined in the New Testament (Romans 2:13-15; 8:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 7:19; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:3, 4; Revelation 22:14). The discussion was about the law of Moses and circumcision. It was decided that Gentiles must not be compelled to be circumcised nor to keep the law of Moses, excepting the generalities of abstaining from idolatry, fornication and food that contained blood. The law of Moses gave many details defining the meaning of idolatry, fornication and abstaining from blood. These clarifications were not to be ignored by Gentiles.

For example, one way fornication is defined in the law of Moses is that a man must not lie with a man (Leviticus 20:13), nor lie with his father’s wife (Leviticus 18:8; 20:11). Both of these practices are condemned for Gentiles elsewhere in the New Testament (Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 5:1). So, though the law of Moses was not to be urged upon Gentiles, there were certain natural laws outlined in the law of Moses that were to be binding upon all men everywhere in every age. The death of Christ and the bringing in of the New Covenant did not alter these natural laws. It is evident therefore that the portions of the Law of Moses that were being urged upon the Gentiles were not relating to natural laws, but rather laws regarding ceremonies and types, which were fulfilled when Christ died.

The conclusion of the meeting in Jerusalem was that Pharisees should not try to compel Gentiles to keep the law of Moses

and be circumcised. Yet, this did not completely stop the Pharisees from continuing to try to compel the Gentiles to observe ceremonies that should have ceased at the death of Christ. Paul continued to meet this element in his travels and ministry for the Gentiles.

This is the setting of the early church. It was under these circumstances that Paul wrote his epistles. We will focus on this more thoroughly as we continue this study, but first, let us look at the timing of the feasts.

Timing of the Feast Days

The Jewish year is not the same as the common year we use today. The first month of the Jewish year begins during March or April. The first feast of the year is the Passover on the 14th of Abib, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread from the 15th-21st of Abib. This was a memorial of the Israelites coming out of Egypt and the 15th and 21st days of this month were called holy convocations and certain types of work were prohibited.

The day after the Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the priest was to wave a sheaf of firstfruits before the Lord. They were then to count fifty days from the day they waved the sheaf unto the next annual feast called, Pentecost. On this day they were to gather and bring loaves of bread and animal sacrifices before the Lord, and certain types of work were forbidden. Pentecost is the only annual feast that is not given a specific date. It was approximately on the 6th day of the third month. The Sadducees and Pharisees of Christ's time differed on the date of Pentecost, and kept it at different times. The Sadducees always kept it on the first day of the week (Sunday), while the Pharisees calculations allowed it to fall on any day of the week. This difference stemmed from two opposing interpretations of the

word *Shabbath* in Leviticus 23:15. The Pharisees took it to mean the first day of Unleavened Bread, the 15th of Abib, while the Sadducees understood the word *Shabbath* to refer to the weekly Sabbath that naturally fell on varying dates inside of the six-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Karaite Jews today follow the Sadducees dating for Pentecost, while the orthodox Jews follow the Pharisees calculations. Since there is no date given in the Bible it is open to interpretation.

In the fall of the year, on the 1st day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. Trumpets were to be blown, along with sacrifices to be made, and no servile work was allowed. These trumpets signified an announcement for the most solemn day of the year, the Day of Atonement, which fell on the 10th day of the seventh month. This was the only day of the year when the High Priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. It was on this day that an atonement was made for the sanctuary, its altar, the priest, and the people, thus the sanctuary was cleansed on this day. It was a solemn day for the Israelites, which they spent in afflicting their souls. This was the only annual feast day upon which no manner of work was allowed. It carried the same restrictions as the weekly Sabbath. It is also the only annual feast that is called a *Shabbath* (*Strong's* #7676), just like the weekly Sabbath.

The final feast of the year was the Feast of Tabernacles held from the 15th-22nd days of the seventh month, the first and last days being holy convocation in which servile work was prohibited. Yet, on the first day of this feast they were commanded to gather branches of several different types of trees (Leviticus 23:40) and to make booths with these branches (Nehemiah 8:15, 16; Leviticus 23:42). It

is worthy to note the distinction here between the weekly Sabbath and this annual feast day. On this annual feast no servile work was allowed, but they were allowed to gather branches and build booths. However, gathering sticks on the Sabbath was strictly forbidden and even punishable by death (Numbers 15:32-36).

Moed

In the Old Testament, there are several Hebrew words for “feast” or “feasts.” It seems the most well known is **מועד** *moed*, even though another word is used more often. Here is an example of the two most frequently used Hebrew words:

“And it shall be the prince’s part to give burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the **feasts** [חג *chag khag* - 2282], and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all **solemnities** [מועד *moed* - 4150] of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 45:17).

The Hebrew word *chag khag*, that was translated here, “feasts” is used 62 times in the Old Testament. Of these 62 times it is translated “feasts,” “feast,” or “feast days” 58 times, and means, “festival, feast” (*Brown-Driver, Brigg’s Hebrew Lexicon*). This is the most common word for feasts in the Old Testament, and it is more descriptive for a feast day than any other OT Hebrew. The Hebrew word *moed* was used 223 times in the Old Testament. Of these 223 times it was translated “feasts” only 23 times, and means “appointed place, appointed time, meeting... appointed sign or signal, tent of meeting” (*Ibid.*). So, *moed* is a general term to signify an appointed place, time, or signal, while *chag khag* refers specifically to a feast.

Some have mistakenly concluded that whenever the word *moed* is used in the Old Testament it refers to feasts, but this is certainly not the case. These people claim to find feasts in some peculiar places, but in reality “feasts” are not signified in these cases at all. The difficulty stems from a misunderstanding of *moed*. Let us notice how this word is used in the Bible.

The first place this word is used in the Bible is Genesis 1:14, which says, “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for **seasons** [*moed*], and for days, and years.” Some have imagined that since the word *moed* is used here, that God instituted all the feast days in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world. Some have even concluded from this verse that the angels were keeping the feast days in heaven before the world was created. Yet, that is not what the verse says. Feasts are not mentioned specifically at all here. If the Hebrew word *chag khag*, which means “feasts,” was used here then it would be possible to conclude that God instituted the feasts in Eden. But that is not what the Bible says. Instead it says that the sun and moon were created in part to allow for appointed times. The sun and moon enable us to appoint times to meet others.

Another misconception about *moed* is that it always relates to *God’s* appointed times, when in reality they can be appointed by anyone. Here are a few examples:

“And he [Saul] tarried seven days, according to the **set time** [*moed*] that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him” (1 Samuel 13:8).

“Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days,

and be thou here present. So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah: but he tarried longer than the **set time** [*moed*] which he had appointed him” (2 Samuel 20:4, 5).

“And he [Elisha] said, About this **season** [*moed*], according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that **season** [*moed*] that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life” (2 Kings 4:16, 17).

“And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a **time** [*moed*], times [*moed*], and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:6, 7). Some have imagined that the use of *moed* here refers to feast days, but notice that the question asked was relating to a time period, not to a feast.

“And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even.... So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the **time appointed** [*moed*] with David, and a little lad with him” (1 Samuel 20:5, 34, 35). Notice the time appointed here was

appointed by David and it was the third day of the month. It is impossible for this to have been a feast day, since there are no feast days on the third day of any month.

“And the LORD appointed a **set time** [*moed*], saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land. And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.” (Exodus 9:5, 6). This took place while the children of Israel were still captives in Egypt, a short time before they were released. This was the fifth of the ten plagues that fell on Egypt, the tenth plague causing Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, on which day was instituted the very first feast day, the Passover. This *moed* could not possibly have occurred on a feast day.

“Now there was an **appointed sign** [*moed*] between the men of Israel and the liars in wait, that they should make a great flame with smoke rise up out of the city” (Judges 20:38). Here the word *moed* is used for a sign to signal others, rather than an appointed time or place.

Speaking of evil men, the Psalmist wrote, “They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the **synagogues** [*moed*] of God in the land” (Psalms 74:8). Here the word *moed* refers to buildings that were burned up rather than to feast days.

The majority of times the word *moed* is used in the Bible (150 out of 223) it was translated “congregation.” “And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the **congregation** [*moed*], and shalt wash them with water” (Exodus 29:4).

From our study of how the word *moed* is used in the Bible, we find that it means an appointed time, an appointed place, or an appointed sign. It can refer to

any appointed time, regardless of who appointed that time. Any appointed time, whether it is the weekly Sabbath, an annual feast day, or a time you plan to meet someone, the Hebrew word for this is *moed*. Just because we find the word *moed* used for the weekly Sabbath, does not mean that it is a Jewish feast day. Instead it is the foremost and most frequent appointed time that God has given us. It was not given for only a select group of people, but for all men everywhere. Jesus said, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Feasts in Leviticus 23

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the **feasts** [*moed*] of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my **feasts** [*moed*]. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings” (Leviticus 23:1-3).

Notice that the first on the list of appointed times is the weekly Sabbath. This is the first and foremost for several reasons.

1) It is in the heart of the Ten Commandments which were written by God’s own finger in tables of stone, and spoken with God’s own mouth on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1, 8-11; 31:18).

2) It existed in the Garden of Eden before sin (Genesis 2:1-3).

3) It does not depend upon sin to exist, but upon God’s creative ability (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11).

4) It will exist after sin and sinners are destroyed (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

In Leviticus 23, God starts off His list of appointed times with the weekly

Sabbath, and states, “the seventh day is the **sabbath** [שַׁבָּת *shabbath* - 7676] of **rest** [שְׁבוּתָן *shabbathown* - 7677], an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the **sabbath** [שַׁבָּת *shabbath* - 7676] of the LORD...” (Leviticus 23:3). There are several things to notice about the Sabbath here. The Hebrew word for Sabbath is שַׁבָּת *shabbath*. Tied to the *Shabbath* is a prohibition of work. Notice there is no qualifier word before work to distinguish the type of work that is prohibited. Instead it simply says “ye shall do no work.” This is important to keep in mind as we continue this study.

To gain a better appreciation of how seriously God considers the Sabbath, notice what the Bible says, “Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death” (Exodus 35:2). The Sabbath is very important to God. He calls it “my holy day” (Isaiah 58:13).

The Sabbath is in the Ten Commandments. These Commandments are a transcript of God’s character, they describe what God is like. Just as God does not change, His law describing His character does not change. In order to change the law you have to change God, and that can never be done (Malachi 3:6; Psalm 89:34).

The Sabbath existed before sin entered this world. It was instituted on the seventh day of the creation week. The reason given for man to rest on that day is that God rested from His work on that day (Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath rests on a higher platform than all the other ceremonies given to man. Every other ceremony is dependent upon sin to exist. If sin had not entered, there would never have been an earthly sanctuary to deal with that problem, nor would there have been a

Passover, or any of the other feast days. Without sin they have no reason to exist. The Sabbath is independent of sin, it existed before it started on this earth, and will continue after it is finished. After this world is dissolved (2 Peter 3:10-13) and God makes a new earth to replace it, the Bible says, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 66:22, 23). The Sabbath started in Eden before sin, and the feasts came 2,500 years later. The Sabbath is not equal to the annual feasts, but holds a more exalted position, and is rightly listed first among God's appointed times.

Shabbath vs. Shabbathown

In the King James Version of the Bible the word "sabbath" appears in three places where the Hebrew word is not *Shabbath*, but rather *shabbathown*. These three places are the only instances in the Bible where *shabbathown* was translated "sabbath." Every other time it was translated "rest." This has caused some to incorrectly conclude that there is no difference between the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts. But, let us look at the facts.

The first place *shabbathown* is translated "sabbath" is in Leviticus 23:24, 25, which says, "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a **sabbath** [*shabbathown* - 7677], a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD." The first day of the seventh month was rarely a Sabbath -

Shabbath (approximately once every seven years), and the restrictions given on that day are not the same as the restrictions for the Sabbath. Notice it says that on that day "no *servile* work" was allowed to be done. This differs from the weekly Sabbath, for on that day the commandment says, "thou shalt not do any work" (Exodus 20:10). Adding the word "servile" before "work" qualifies the type of work that is prohibited. For example, if I were to say to my son, "You cannot eat any food today." That would be different and more restrictive than if I would say, "You cannot eat any green food today." By adding the qualifier word, "green," I have lessened the restriction, because he is now allowed to eat any other color of food, just not green food. This is what God did when he added the qualifier word, "servile," to the work restrictions on the feast days. Other types of work were allowed.

The Hebrew word עבדה *abodah* - 5656, that was translated "servile," was used 141 times in the Old Testament, and translated as follows: service 96, servile 12, work 10, bondage 8, act 2, serve 2, servitude 2, tillage 2, effect 1, labour 1, misc. 5. It seems to always refer to work you do for someone else as a service to them, either voluntary or slave labor. It was this type of work that was forbidden on certain of the annual feast days, while all manner of work was forbidden on the weekly Sabbath.

Let us notice a few examples. In speaking of the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Bible says, "In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work

therein” (Leviticus 23:7, 8). Though these days are not specifically called *shabbathown* days, the same restrictions are given, “no servile work.” In describing the first day of Unleavened Bread, God said, “no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you” (Exodus 12:16). Here we find that when the restrictions given were, “no servile work,” then food preparation was allowed.

Notice what God said about the Passover: “In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb... And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” (Exodus 12:3-6). The Passover lamb was to be killed “in the evening” of the 14th. The Bible clarifies, “thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun” (Deuteronomy 16:6).

After the Passover lamb was killed, the Bible says, “And they shall take of the blood,... And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.... that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire” (Exodus 12:7-10). The Passover lamb was to be slain in the evening, at the going down of the sun, of the 14th day of the month. Keep in mind that biblical days began in the evening (Genesis 1:5; Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 23:32). At the evening or going down of the sun of the 14th was the beginning of the 15th day of the month. The Passover lamb was slain in the even of the 14th, so closely to the 15th that in one verse it says that it was killed on the 15th. “And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days [15th-21st]; neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at

even, remain all night until the morning” (Deuteronomy 16:4). Here it says that the Passover was killed at the even of the 15th.

After the Passover was killed, then it was to be “roast with fire.” If any of the animal was left until morning, the carcass was to be burned with fire. This would take place early in the morning of the 15th. So we see that the Israelites were preparing food on the dark part of the 15th day of the month, and then burning the remains with fire early in the morning of the 15th.

On the first Passover, the Israelites gathered all of their belongings and left in haste. In fact, they were told to eat the Passover quickly, with shoes on their feet, fully dressed, and their staff in their hands, ready to leave. In their haste they did not have time to make normal bread. “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual” (Exodus 12:39).

So we find that on the 15th day of the month, on which “no servile work” was allowed, there was a great deal of work that was done, especially on that first day they celebrated it. They roast a lamb with fire, they disposed of the leftover carcass by burning it with fire, they baked unleavened bread, and they gathered and moved all their herds and belongings, and even collected gold, jewels, and clothing from the Egyptians for their journey (Numbers 33:3). This was an immense amount of work, but none of it was “servile work,” so it was not contrary to God’s instructions for that day.

Yet, on the weekly Sabbath, God had said, “thou shalt not do any work” (Exodus 20:10). And none of those things could have been done on the weekly Sabbath without violating that command. God told

them, “Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the **sabbath** [*shabbath* - 7676] day” (Exodus 35:3). God had also told them to prepare their food the day before the Sabbath so they wouldn’t have to do it on the Sabbath (Exodus 16:23). Jeremiah told us, “Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the **sabbath** [*shabbath* - 7676] day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the **sabbath** [*shabbath* - 7676] day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the **sabbath** [*shabbath* - 7676] day, as I commanded your fathers” (Jeremiah 17:21, 22).

We can clearly see a distinction between the weekly Sabbath and the annual feast days. There is a difference between the prohibitions, “no servile work” and “thou shalt not do any work.” One has a qualifier, and only prohibits certain types of work, while the other prohibits all manner of work.

The only annual feast day that was actually called a *Shabbath* was the Day of Atonement. The same work prohibitions that we find on the weekly Sabbath are also applied to this day. Notice how thoroughly God makes this point. “And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.... And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a **sabbath** [*shabbath* - 7676] of rest [*shabbathown* - 7677], and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your **sabbath** [*shabbath* - 7676]” (Leviticus 23:28, 30-32). There is no

qualifier word before work in these verses, but it is stated emphatically that no work at all can be done.

In speaking of the final feast of the year, the Feast of Tabernacles, the King James Version again translates *shabbathown* to “sabbath.” It says, “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a **sabbath** [*shabbathown* - 7677], and on the eighth day shall be a **sabbath** [*shabbathown* - 7677]. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days” (Leviticus 23:39, 40). These *shabbathown* days are given the same “servile work” prohibition (v. 34, 35). Yet, the Israelites were told to gather branches and build booths to dwell in on that day (Nehemiah 8:15, 16). This is work, but it is not paid work, so it was allowed on a feast day *shabbathown*, but not on the weekly Sabbath (Numbers 15:32, 36).

After all of the annual feasts are described, God said, “These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: *Beside the sabbaths of the LORD*, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD” (Leviticus 23:37, 38). The annual feasts were to be kept in addition to the weekly Sabbath. Here, again, a distinction is made between the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts. They are not on the same footing by any means. The annual feasts are temporary

by design, while the weekly Sabbath will last for all eternity (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

A New Era

When Jesus died, “The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent” (Matthew 27:51). This signified a new era. Things had drastically changed. Jesus had warned the Israelites, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 23:38). The rent veil revealed that the glory of God no longer resided in the tabernacle; it was truly left desolate.

Jesus’ dying words were “It is finished” (John 19:30). These words carried great significance, for much was finished at this time. Our salvation was secured, and the earthly sanctuary services with all of their animal sacrifices had met their fulfillment. No longer was there a need for earthly priests to sprinkle blood on the veil, the altar or the mercy seat on the Ark of the Covenant. Without the tabernacle, the Day of Atonement would be next to impossible to celebrate with any meaning. Much of the requirements on all the other feast days could not be accomplished without animal sacrifices.

These limitations did not stop some from trying to continue these old formalities. The Jews continued their services in the tabernacle for the next 39 years, and many years later the Roman Catholic Church instituted their own priesthood to take the place of the Levitical priest. Yet, this is all in vain, for we now have a high priest in heaven, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:1). We do not have to confess our sins to men, but to God alone (1 John 1:9).

As we learned earlier, after Christ’s death, it was no longer necessary to be circumcised to be part of the family of God (Galatians 5:1-4). Yet, it was not allowed for uncircumcised men to participate in

the Passover (Exodus 12:48). Therefore there was no provision for Gentiles to keep the Passover, for it was never intended for them. The wall of partition that separated the Jews from the Gentiles was abolished in Christ (Ephesians 2:14). God used a remarkable vision to reveal to Peter that uncircumcised Gentiles were to be accepted as brethren. Peter was shown a sheet filled with unclean animals, and he was told to kill and eat, but Peter refused. This was repeated three times, until Peter finally got the message, as he explained to the Gentile, Cornelius; “God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).

Traditions of Men

After Christ died, the earthly sanctuary and its services were to forever cease. Yet, not everyone knew that, and many of the Jewish converts tried to compel the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:1-5). Paul argued with these Pharisees many times, and often found himself defending the Gentiles, and warning them of the dangers of being deceived by these Pharisees. He wrote to the Colossian Gentiles, “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after *the tradition of men*, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8). Here, Paul was warning the Colossians against men who would try to corrupt them after the tradition of men and rudiments of the world, not after Christ. Who was Paul warning them against? Paul clarifies a few verses later, “In whom [Christ] also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ” (Colossians 2:11). Paul saw the necessity of combining his warning against the traditions of men with a reminder that these Gentiles were already

circumcised by the circumcision of Christ. This connection shows that Paul was warning the Colossians against Pharisees who would try to corrupt them with “the tradition of men” and “circumcision.” Paul was meeting the same challenge he met in Acts 15 with the Pharisees teaching the Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, only here Paul calls it “the tradition of men.”

You see, after the death of Christ, the continuation of the earthly sanctuary and its services was a “tradition of men” even though it had been “the law of Moses.” Paul continued, stating that when Christ died He performed the, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:14-17).

In connection with Paul’s warning to the Colossians about the Pharisees who would try to compel them to keep the traditions of men and be circumcised, he pointed out that when Christ died he blotted out “the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us.” This evidently has something to do with the context. There must be something that was blotted out in relation to circumcision and keeping the law of Moses, called “the tradition of men,” after Christ’s death.

Concerning the law of Moses, the Bible says, “Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant

of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee” (Deuteronomy 31:26). The law of Moses was handwritten on paper and stored in the side of the ark as a witness against the Israelites. It was against us, and it was contrary to us, for Peter argued against the Pharisees who were trying to entangle the Gentiles with it, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10).

So there was something in the law of Moses that was nailed to the cross. We have already noticed that it was not the natural laws regarding health or explanations of the moral Ten Commandment law. These laws served as a guard for the Ten Commandments, explaining its precepts in more detail, such as we have already noticed regarding adultery. When Christ died, it did nothing to the requirements of the Ten Commandments. They remain holy (Romans 7:12), just as God is holy. Neither did His death bring about a change to unclean animals to make them clean. A pig is still just as filthy as it was before Christ’s death. In fact God gives a strong warning to anyone who would dare to eat swine’s flesh when Christ returns (Isaiah 66:15-17).

No, God did not altar these natural and moral laws when Christ died. But there was something that was changed, something that was nailed to the cross. This includes circumcision and certain things in the law of Moses. Paul clarified what he was referring to. He wrote, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days” (Colossians 2:16). Paul started this verse by stating, “Let no man *therefore*...” You would never start a conversation by saying “Therefore.” The word “therefore”

signifies the conclusion of something that was previously stated. Paul was building a point. He had just pointed out that something was nailed to the cross, after warning against traditions of men and circumcision, now he brings home the point. He tells us what in “the law of Moses” specifically was nailed to the cross. He said because these things were nailed to the cross, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16, 17).” Here we find what Paul understood to be the elements of the law of Moses that were nailed to the cross, and which should not be urged upon Gentiles. This pinpoints what Paul referred to as “the tradition of men,” against which he warned them. It all ties together.

Some have concluded that the traditions he was warning against were pagan traditions; that Paul was warning them against returning to paganism. But, if that were the case he would not have mentioned these things, and especially not circumcision in this connection. Paul was definitely warning against Pharisees urging Jewish traditions upon the Gentiles. This is a recurring theme in Paul’s letters.

He mentions several things that the Gentiles should not allow to be thrust upon them and for which others may judge them. He lists 1) meat, 2) drink, 3) respect of an holyday, 4) the new moon, 5) the sabbath days. He then says that these are “a shadow of things to come.” A shadow is inferior to the reality. A shadow points forward to something more substantial to come. In the book of Hebrews Paul contrasted the Levitical priesthood with the superior priesthood of Christ. He wrote of the Levites that they “serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly

things” (Hebrews 8:5). A shadow is designed to be temporary until the reality comes.

Earlier in Hebrews Paul stated, “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Hebrews 7:12). The only law that Paul could have been referring to is the law of Moses pertaining to priests and their services, for that is the only law that would necessitate a change when the priesthood is changed. Paul later stated, “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Hebrews 10:1). Here we learn that the law regarding the Levitical priests, their sacrifices, and their services were a shadow of “good things to come.” The same is said about those things listed in Colossians 2:16.

Let us identify what about each of these things is a shadow of things to come.

1) Meat: Meat itself, separated from the sanctuary and its sacrifices, is not a shadow of things to come. But meat as an offering is highly symbolic of the death of Christ. The meat referred to here is meat offerings (Hebrews 9:10). Some have mistakenly concluded from this verse that all meats, including unclean meats, are acceptable to eat by Gentiles. But to conclude that from this verse is to take it out of context. Those things that were nailed to the cross were things that are shadows of Christ, not unclean animals.

2) Drink: The same is true here of drinks, these can only be properly understood in light of the context. The drink here must be drink offerings that pointed forward to Christ. Meat and drink offerings were offered every morning and evening by the priests in the earthly sanctuary

(Exodus 29:41). They certainly pointed forward to Christ, for He said, "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55).

3) Respect of an Holyday: The Greek word that was translated "holyday" was used 27 times in the New Testament, 26 of which were translated "feast." This is definitely referring to the feast days. They are a shadow of Christ and His work. Paul wrote, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

4) The New Moon: On each new moon the Levitical priests were required to offer certain sacrifices. Even though there were no work restrictions given in the Bible regarding the new moon days (with the exception of the seventh month), at least some people seemed to begin having festivities on this day (1 Samuel 20:5). All of the sacrifices offered on that day were a shadow of Christ. These, of course, were to cease when Christ died.

5) The Sabbath Days: Literally this reads "sabbaths," for the word "days" is supplied by the translators. Again, the context must be considered to understand this properly. The only Sabbath days that could be referred to here are those in "the law of Moses," and those that were "a shadow of things to come." They also must be those that could be blotted out or nailed to the cross. The Sabbath of the Ten Commandments could not be blotted out. If it was to be altered it would have to be chiseled out, not blotted out, for it was engraved in stone. Nor could this stone be nailed to the cross. The wording indicates that it is something handwritten on paper. Thus, according to the context, the sabbath days here must be those in the law of Moses, such as the annual Day of Atonement sabbaths, the sabbaths of the land (Leviticus 25:4), and the sabbaths of years (Leviticus 25:8, 9). In addition, whatever

Sabbaths he refers to are said to be "against us" and "contary to us." This could never be said about the weekly Sabbath. It was made for man's benefit (Mark 2:27; Deuteronomy 10:13). If Jesus had planned to abolish the weekly Sabbath, He would not have warned His disciples not to flee on the Sabbath day when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD (Matthew 24:20).

Some have claimed that the handwriting of ordinances that was blotted out was a record of our sins. It is true that our sins were nailed to the cross, but that is not specifically what Paul was referring to. First of all, in the sanctuary service the sins of people were not written on paper, but confessed over an animal sacrifice. Paul mentions what was nailed to the cross in connection with his warning against circumcision, and observing traditions of men, and further clarifies by explaining those things that should not be urged upon Gentiles. Then, in case it was not clear up to this point, Paul adds, "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" (Colossians 2:20). Paul pointed out that these ordinances were blotted out, and contended with the Colossians for seeking to be subject to these ordinances. Paul was not imagining them trying to take up again the record of their sins. Instead, he was warning them against the doctrine of the Pharisees. Paul concluded by calling these things, "the commandments and doctrines of men" (Colossians 2:22).

Paul to the Galatians

Paul encountered the same type of Pharisee influence with the Galatians. He wrote to them. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and

beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (Galatians 4:9-11). This is a strong warning! He was worried that their salvation would be lost because of this influence. He warns them of "weak and beggarly elements" and desiring to "be in bondage" again. Then he specifies what he is talking about, by stating, "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Here he pinpoints his concern, the observation of holidays.

To make it abundantly clear against whom he is warning them, he wrote, "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar" (Galatians 4:21-24). Here he tells them of the bondage he was worried about, that which came from mount Sinai. He continued, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Galatians 5:1, 2).

Paul had great concern for the Galatians, and mentioned things that would bring them into bondage, the observation of holidays, which came from Sinai, and circumcision. The brunt of Paul's concern came from the Pharisees who were trying to entangle the Gentiles in Jewish customs. He calls it a "yoke of bondage." Peter, at the counsel in Acts 15, called it "a yoke... which neither our

fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10).

There are some today who claim that when Paul said, "days, and months, and times, and years," he was talking about pagan rituals rather than those of Judaism. Yet, that cannot be the case, for he explains that they came from Sinai, not paganism. The primary word used to sustain this argument is the word "again." The reasoning is that the Galatians were pagans, and so when Paul warns them "ye desire *again* to be in bondage" he must be referring to them returning to something they had previously practiced. Yet, bondage is bondage, Paul reminded them of the bondage they experienced in paganism, and warned them against returning to bondage in a different form, namely that which comes from Sinai. Paul gave the same warning with different words when he wrote, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled *again* with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be *circumcised*, Christ shall profit you nothing" (Galatians 5:1, 2). Here, Paul warns against being entangled again with the yoke of bondage, and warns against circumcision. It is obvious that Paul was not warning them against getting circumcised a second time, for that could not be done. Rather, he was warning against returning to bondage in a different form. The context makes it clear that the days, and months, and times, and years he spoke of were Jewish holidays.

Statutes

God said of Abraham that he "obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Genesis 26:5). Abraham lived over 500 years before Moses came on the scene and before God established the first annual feast day. Yet, God said of him that he

kept His statutes. For some reason, there are many today who associate the word “statutes” with feast days. Because of this they imagine that Abraham was celebrating feast days long before the first Passover and earthly sanctuary. Yet, this is an unrealistic and unnecessary conclusion from this verse. The first record of anyone observing a feast day is the Passover when the Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage over 500 years after Abraham died. A statute is “something prescribed, an ordinance” (*Brown-Driver, and Brigg’s Hebrew Lexicon*). There is nothing in the word that binds it to feast days. In fact most of the statutes given in the Bible are not feast days. Moses said, “It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood” (Leviticus 3:17; also read Exodus 29:9; Leviticus 17:7; 19:19; 24:3; Numbers 10:7-9; 18:23; 19:2, 10, 21; 27:11, etc.).

The Bible says, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The admonition for us to rightly divide the word of truth signifies that there is a wrong way to divide it as well. It is wrong to conclude that since Abraham kept God’s statutes, he therefore kept the feast days. God says that we are to obey the powers that be (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13). Today there are signs on the road that read, “Stop,” “Yield,” “One Way,” “No Turn on Red,” etc. These are all laws today, and as Christians we are obligated to obey them. We read of Abraham that he kept God’s commandments and statutes, but it would be unreasonable to assume that Abraham obeyed street signs as we have them today. Why? Because those laws did not exist in his day. He could only obey the laws that were available to

him at that time. He could not have kept feast days that did not exist. He simply obeyed what God made known to him when he was alive, and that did not include feast days.

I Must... Keep this Feasts

Paul said something in Ephesus that has caused some to think that Paul always kept the feasts. He said, “I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem” (Acts 18:21). But let’s look at the context.

Paul ministered to the brethren in Corinth. “And he continued there *a year and six months*, teaching the word of God among them.... And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for *he had a vow*. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and *reasoned with the Jews*. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus” (Acts 18:11, 18-21). Paul remained in Corinth for a year and half, during which time several feasts were kept in Jerusalem, but he missed them all. Then it says that Paul shaved his head because he had a vow, and would not stay with the brethren in Ephesus because he said, “I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.” Paul had just missed several feasts in Jerusalem, but now, all of a sudden, he has a great desire to go to Jerusalem for a feast. It seems that it had something to do with the vow he had just taken.

One consistent practice of Paul was that he took every opportunity to minister

to his Jewish brethren (Acts 18:19). Paul had a zeal for the Jews. He wanted them to be saved. We can be certain that when he travelled to Jerusalem for the feast, he was going to use this opportunity to minister to as many Jews as possible. The feast gathering was a perfect time to minister to a lot of Jews at one time. It is likely that this was a driving force compelling him to go to Jerusalem at that time. Paul certainly did not feel that he was required by God to keep feasts at Jerusalem, for he had just missed at least four of them just during his stay in Corinth.

Another interesting point is that Paul left the Gentile Ephesians in Ephesus while he went to Jerusalem. He obviously did not expect the Gentiles to keep this feast in Jerusalem. He went, perhaps partly because of his vow, and largely so he could witness to a large audience of Jews. This passage does not prove that Paul was a feast keeper. He may have participated in certain rituals while he was there so he could win as many Jews as possible. He said, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law" (1 Corinthians 9:20).

The Bible says of Paul, "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost" (Acts 20:16). Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. No reason is given for this, other than Paul was determined to do it, and it is certain that he wanted to witness to his Jewish brethren. God had used Pentecost to convert thousands of Jews shortly after Christ died. Here was another opportunity, and Paul was determined not to pass it up. Paul was a

missionary, and that is why he attended the large Jewish gatherings.

Let us Keep the Feast

Paul made an interesting statement to the Gentile believers in Corinth. He wrote, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our pass-over is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

There was a man in the Corinthian church who was blatantly committing adultery, and Paul counseled them to put that man out the church if he would not stop. That is what he meant by purging out the leaven. He likened the wickedness of this man to leaven, just as Jesus had done. Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). His disciples did not understand him, so he explained, "How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:11, 12). Just as Jesus was not talking about real leaven, neither was Paul.

Paul was using symbolism in this chapter, and points out that Christ is our Passover. Some have assumed that Paul was telling the Corinthians that they should literally keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, yet it is obvious that Paul is using symbolism. He is saying, let us keep a symbolic Feast of Unleavened Bread by removing leaven from our midst. Paul was

not intending that this process only take place during the Jewish festival, but all the time. Robertson says, “Wherefore let us keep the feast (ὥστε εορταζόμεν). Present active subjunctive (volitive). Let us keep on keeping the feast, a perpetual feast (Lightfoot), and keep the leaven out. It is quite possible that Paul was writing about the time of the Jewish passover, since it was before pentecost (#1Co 16:8). But, if so, that is merely incidental, and his language here is not a plea for the observance of Easter by Christians” (*Robertson’s New Testament Word Pictures*).

The Feast in Zachariah

There is a reference to the Feast of Tabernacles in Zechariah 14. This has caused some to conclude that the Feast of Tabernacles will be kept throughout all eternity after sin is destroyed. To understand this chapter you have to know the events surrounding the millennium. (For a thorough study on this subject, please contact us and request the January 2010 issue of *Present Truth*.)

Here is a brief description of what will happen at the end. There will be a time of tribulation during which you will not be allowed to buy or sell unless you have the mark of the beast (Revelation 13). There will be no secret rapture (Matthew 24:37-42; Luke 17:34-37). The Lord will return at the end of the tribulation to rescue His people, and all the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ’s coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 6:15-17). At this time the righteous dead will be resurrected and they, along with the righteous living, will be taken to heaven to live with Christ for a thousand years (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Revelation 20:6). The wicked will remain dead on the earth during the millennium, and Satan will be trapped here with nothing to do (Revelation 20:1-3, 5). At the end of

the millennium, the New Jerusalem will descend from heaven to the earth with all the saints inside (Revelation 21:10). The wicked will be resurrected, and Satan will again go out to deceive them, and convince them to surround the camp of the saints to overthrow it, but will instead be destroyed by fire (Revelation 20:5, 7-9). This fire will burn the earth, and then God will make a new earth (2 Peter 3:10-13) where he will dwell with his saints forever (Revelation 21:22).

Now let us read the context of Zechariah 14 to see what is meant by the Feast of Tabernacles.

Before the Second Coming: The chapter starts off by saying, “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city” (Zechariah 14:1, 2). Zechariah was writing after Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and its inhabitants taken to Babylon. It was rebuilt, and then destroyed again in 70 AD. This may be talking about that time, but it is certain that it is before the second coming of Christ.

Second Coming: The next verse refers to the Second Coming of Christ. “Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle” (Zechariah 14:3; see also Revelation 19:11-15).

Third Coming: The next verse talks about the third coming, when Jesus will return to this earth with all the saints in the New Jerusalem (See Revelation 21:10; 20:9). “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before

Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" (Zechariah 14:4, 5). The fact that all the saints come with Jesus at this time demonstrates that it has to be His third coming, after the millennium (Read Revelation 20).

The New Earth: The next scene depicts the new earth. "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.... Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (Zechariah 14:8-11; read Revelation 21).

The Destruction of the Wicked: The next scene depicts the destruction of the wicked. "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour" (Zechariah 14:12, 13). Here is a graphic description of the destruction of the wicked

that takes place at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20).

Before the Second Coming: The next scene goes back to before the second coming of Jesus and spreads to during the Millennium. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, where-with the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Here it talks about the cohabitation on the earth between righteous and wicked. This happens now until the second coming, and it will happen for a short time at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:5-9). It speaks of people being punished, which happens both at the second coming of Christ and the third coming. It is certain that this is not talking about the new earth, which does not exist until after the wicked are destroyed. The keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned here seems to symbolize dwelling with the Lord in a temporary location. The Feast of Tabernacles is the final feast of the year, and the participants are to dwell in temporary dwellings. During the millennium, the righteous will live with God in a temporary dwelling for a thousand years. Afterward we will live with God forever on the earth made new. The symbolism indicates that if we do

not participate in dwelling with the Lord during the millennium (the Feast of Tabernacles), then we will be destroyed at the end of the millennium when fire descends from God and destroys the wicked (Revelation 20:9).


This chapter jumps around in time similar to the book of Revelation. We can be certain that the Feast of Tabernacles mentioned here is not in the new earth, and so cannot be used to prove this feast will be perpetually kept. Notice what Isaiah says about the new earth, “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 66:22, 23). In the new earth we will be keeping the Sabbath, and meeting with the Lord on the new moon, but we will not be keeping feast days. I believe the reason we meet the Lord on the new moon is to collect the new fruit from the tree of life. The Bible says of this tree that it, “bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month” (Revelation 22:2). It will be exciting to eat of that tree. I pray that you will be there. “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

Conclusion

A study of the feast days and the sanctuary yields a wealth of information for us to learn the plan of salvation. When Jesus came to this earth He died at the feast of Passover, was resurrected as the firstfruits, and returned in Spirit form on the day of Pentecost (Acts 3:26; Galatians 4:6). He fulfilled the spring feasts on time. He ascended to heaven to minister as our High

Priest, and fulfill the fall feasts, including the Day of Atonement. He will return soon to take us to our temporary dwelling to fulfill the Feast of Tabernacles.

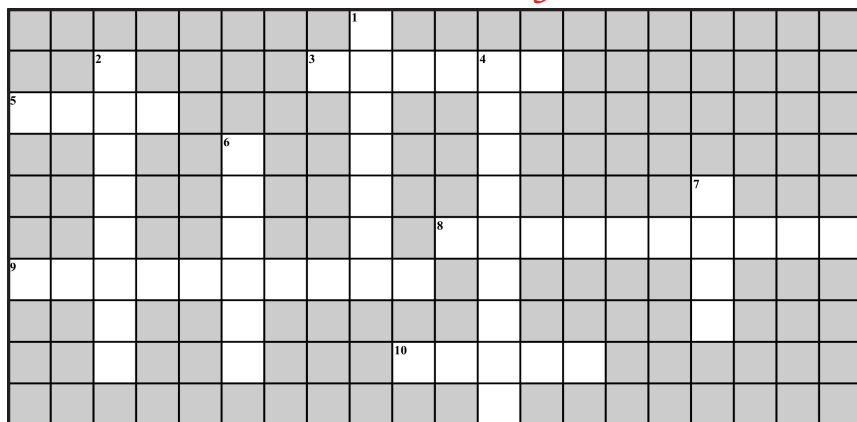
God gave everything for a reason, and there are many lessons to learn from all of His dealings with man. Yet, it is clear to me that the time for these things to be observed came to an end when Christ died and the veil of the temple was ripped in half. You can benefit from the study of the sanctuary without physically participating in its services. The same is true with the feast days. You do not have to kill a lamb and sprinkle blood on your doorposts, nor literally eat unleavened bread and dwell in booths to gain the benefits of the lessons contained in the feast days. Just as circumcision is not required for Gentile Christians, so keeping the feasts and traditions of the Jews is not a requirement for us today, and can even become problematic if we think they are obligatory, or somehow enhance our salvation. Paul kept certain feasts on occasion to help him win the Jews for Christ, and it was not a sinful practice for him to do that because God called him to do it. Yet, he warned the Gentiles against keeping these things, for it could lead to legalism and the loss of their salvation. In dealing with this subject it would be well to heed the counsel of Paul, “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way” (Romans 14:13).

I pray that you will take time to study these things out for yourself, and remain faithful to what God reveals to you. Remember to be on guard against the leaven (the doctrines) of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:6, 12). I anticipate spending eternity with you and with the rest of the redeemed. Maranatha! 

Present Truth **Something for the Young at Heart**

This month we are continuing a series of crossword Bible studies based on the book, *Bible Handbook*, by Stephen Haskell. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line. (The KJV is required.)

How to Read and Study the Bible



Answers will be printed on the back page of next month's issue

➤ When reading the word of God, read distinctly, and give the sense. In this way you may cause others to _____ the word of God. Nehemiah 8:8—**9 Across**

➤ How you read the scriptures is as important as what is in them. "He said unto him, what is _____ in the law? how readeſt thou?" Luke 10:26—**1 Down**

➤ Think about what you read in God's word. By this God will give you understanding. "_____ what I ſay; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." 2 Timothy 2:7—**2 Down**

➤ God ſends His angels to help us understand. An angel ſaid, "Underſtand the words that I _____ unto thee." Daniel 10:11—**10 Across**

➤ The diſciples were to teach God's word. "Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have _____ you." Matthew 28:20—**4 Down**

➤ Paul told Timothy to. "_____ the word; be inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon..." 2 Timothy 4:2—**3 Across**

➤ "If any man ſhall add unto theſe things, God ſhall add unto him the plagues that are written in this _____." Revelation 22:18—**5 Across**

Note: God has expreſſed the thoughts He intended to convey uſing words, and we are to ſtudy thoſe words to get from them the thoughts He wants us to have.

➤ "Every word of God is _____: he is a ſhield unto them that put their truſt in him." Proverbs 30:5-6—**7 Down**

➤ "He that hath my word, let him ſpeak my word _____." Jeremiah 23:28—**8 Across**

➤ God ſays "Come now, and let us _____ together." Isaiah 1:18—**6 Down**



You May Freely Eat?

by Jim Raymond

Answers to Questions on Last Month's Entry

Last month's YMFE article by Dr. John Cannell, generated some questions. So far all of the questions pertain to the ninth indent (paragraph) which is reproduced here:

"Professor Urashima and colleagues in Japan gave 1,200 IU/day of vitamin D3 for six months to Japanese 10 year-olds in a randomized controlled trial. They found vitamin D dramatically reduced the incidence of influenza A as well as the episodes of asthma attacks in the treated kids while the placebo group was not so fortunate. If Dr. Urashima had followed the newest FNB recommendations, it is unlikely that 400 IU/day treatment arm would have done much of anything and some of the treated young teenagers may have come to serious harm without the vitamin D."

The questions are basically two:

First: What does Dr. Cannell mean by: "the treatment arm"

Answer: In this study there were two arms. The treatment arm of the study means the group that got the 1,200 IU of vitamin D3/day. The second arm in this study is called the "placebo group", as

such; they were not treated with vitamin D3. This placebo arm could also be called, "the control arm" of the study.

Secondly: The last sentence in this paragraph generated some confusion.

Answer: Dr Cannell is voicing concern for one possible reason that may explain why we see mixed results between various studies. It could be as simple as: Those studies which use a relatively low dose show little to no benefit, while those studies that use a significantly higher dosage show significant benefit.

Why would they use doses which are too low? Because, in the past, it was assumed that the FNB had good reason for setting the recommended intakes so low (400 IU/day). So, a conservative researcher may be concerned about giving too much to the children in the treatment arm. Not wanting to hurt anyone, they might design the treatment arm at 600 IU (150% of the FBN guidelines), rather than 1,200 IU (or 300% of the guidelines). In this case neither the 400 IU nor the 600 IU dose is enough to even meet the true daily needs, so neither will show an effect better than that of the placebo arm. This is the whole point of the article.

Blessings! JR

2011 Florida Bible Study Retreat

Presented by Eden House Fellowship

This year's retreat will take on a different flavor. The planned agenda features seminars and participative activities designed to enhance your Bible study and sharing experience, while allowing time to get to know other *Present Truth* subscribers.

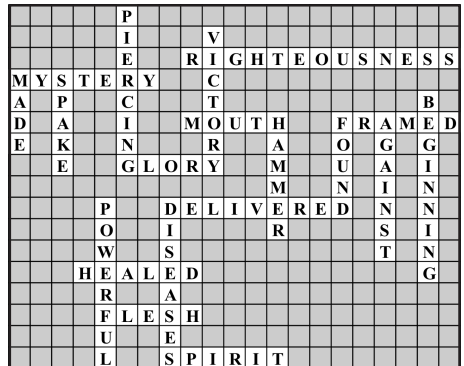
We believe that it is time that the saints were equipped with the tools and skill-sets to effectively study the Bible for themselves, and to personally share the Good News of the Kingdom. In keeping with this belief, Eden House Fellowship is hosting a Non-denominational Bible

Study Retreat from March 2-6, at Camp Thunderbird, near Apopka, Florida. We plan to offer less preaching and more interactive seminars and practical discussion or demonstration classes in:

- **The principles of Bible study and interpretation**
- **Bible Study Tools (3 separate classes are planned):**
 - Traditional (Books — real paper and real ink)
 - On-Line Bible (Computer down-loadable software)
 - e-Sword Bible (Computer down-loadable software or internet based)
- **How to prepare Bible studies for others (including for varying ages)**
- **How to choose and distribute literature**
- **How to set up a “Print Shop”, including a tour**
- **Health and Wellness.**
 - Florida Gardening — with a Certified Master Gardener
 - Silver — “it does a body good”
 - Food Matters — expose and discussion
 - China Study — How to bring it home
 - Practical Agriculture
 - Family / community based agriculture

- Medical Costs Attributable to Meat Consumption
- Getting started on the new you
- **Ideas for passing out literature**
- **Effective door to door witnessing — no survey!**
- **Using computers to do ministry work**
- **Community outreach methods**
- **Sharing in Writing: Getting started to stepping up**
- **Children’s activities to support Bible Lessons**

Reply to: jim@presenttruth.info For immediate accurate details, contact: Jerri at 407-291-9565. No answer? Leave a message with a clear phone number or email address. No response within 2 days means we could not understand something, so please try again. ✍



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