

# *Foundation Institute*

## *Center for Biblical Education*

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### *Fundamental Beliefs*

*Church of God, a Worldwide Association*



### *Feasts of God*

### *Handouts/Study Material*

## ***Foundation Institute Handout***

### ***God's Holy Days***

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#### ***Important Scriptures:***

*Genesis 1:14-16 (KJV)*

<sup>14</sup>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, and for days, and years: <sup>15</sup>And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. <sup>16</sup>And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: *he made* the stars also.

*Genesis 1:14-16 (The New English Bible)*

God said, Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to separate day from night, and let them serve as signs both for festivals and for seasons and years.

*Genesis 1:14 (The Pentateuch, Samson R. Hirsch, New York: Bloch 1963)*

God spake: Let there be a system of light-bearers in the vault of the heaven to distinguish between the day and the night, and they shall also serve for signs and for festival times and for cycles of days and years.

Hebrew for *seasons* = מועד , mo'ed; Enhanced Strong's Concordance:

4150

AV - congregation 150, feast 23, season 13, appointed 12, time 12, assembly 4, solemnity 4, solemn 2, days 1, sign 1, synagogues 1; 223

1) appointed place, appointed time, meeting

1a) appointed time

1a1) appointed time (general)

1a2) sacred season, set feast, appointed season

1b) appointed meeting

1c) appointed place

1d) appointed sign or signal

1e) tent of meeting

*Leviticus 23:1-4 (King James Version)*

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are* my feasts. <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>*These are* the feasts of the LORD, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.

*Matthew 5:17-19 (King James Version)*

<sup>17</sup>Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. <sup>18</sup>For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Greek word for *fulfill* = πληροο (pleroo)

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πληρώ<sup>f</sup>: to give the true or complete meaning to something - 'to give the true meaning to, to provide the real significance of.'

οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι

'I did not come to destroy but to give true meaning to' (Matthew 5:17)

ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν

"...for the whole Law has its true meaning in one expression, Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14). In speaking of 'true meaning,' it may be useful in some languages to use a phrase meaning 'real intent' or 'real purpose.'<sup>1</sup>

*Acts 15:5 (King James Version)*

<sup>5</sup>But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.

*Acts 15:5 (Greek Text)*

<sup>5</sup>Ἐξανέστησαν δέ τινες τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων πεπιστευκότες λέγοντες ὅτι δεῖ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς παρὰγγέλλειν τε τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως.<sup>2</sup>

The underlined word, *paraggevllein*, means "to order" or "for the purpose of." The intent is that Gentiles were to be circumcised in order to fulfill the law of Moses. The subject is clearly circumcision as it is delineated in the law of Moses and not the Law.

*Acts 15:5 (Jewish New Testament)*

But some of those who had come to trust were from the party of the P'rushim; and they stood up and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Torah of Moshe.'<sup>3</sup>

*Acts 15:24 (Greek Text)*

<sup>24</sup>Ἐπειδὴ ἠκούσαμεν ὅτι τινὲς ἐξ ἡμῶν [ἐξεληθόντες] ἐτάραξαν ὑμᾶς λόγοις ἀνασκευάζοντες τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν οἷς οὐ διεστειλάμεθα,<sup>4</sup>

Most translations accurately reflect the Greek in this instance, but not the King James. Here is the King James translation: "<sup>24</sup>Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your

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<sup>1</sup> Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, *The Greek New Testament*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1983.

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish New Testament* by David Stern

<sup>4</sup> Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, *The Greek New Testament*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1983.

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souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment.”<sup>5</sup> Compare this to the other translations: “24 Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls.”<sup>6</sup> There is no reference to the phrase “*and keep the law.*” This phrase cannot be found in all Greek texts.

#### *1 Corinthians 5:8 (King James Version)*

<sup>8</sup>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.

As the literal yeast was removed from the house during the Festival of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12:15-20; 13:1-10), so that which it illustrated, sin, was to be removed from the house of God, the local church, during its “Festival of Unleavened Bread,” a continual observance for a Christian who has found in Christ’s death on the cross the once-for-all sacrifice of the Passover Lamb (cf. John 1:29; Heb. 10:10, 14).<sup>7</sup>

1 Corinthians 5:8 -- the use of the Greek word for “keep.” This is the only use of this word in the scriptures. It means to “observe.” It is also in the present tense, active voice, and subjunctive mood. It is an activity that is ongoing. If Paul was referencing something that had ended, he would have used a different Greek word and a different mood. The subjunctive mood is often used for commands that have conditions—if you do this then such and such will happen. Notice Vines explanation of the word: “1. ἡορτάζω [ἡορτάζω, (1858)], to keep festival (akin to A, No. 1) is translated “let us keep the feast,” in 1 Cor. 5:8.”<sup>8</sup> The Greek lexicons have comments on this word as well:

ἡορτάζω, ἰον. ὁρτάζω· ἱμπφ. ἑώρταζον (with irreg. augm. in second syll.): f. ἄσω· αορ. ἰ ἑώρτασα (with irreg. augm.), inf. ἡορτάσαι· (ἡορτή)·<sup>1</sup>to keep festival or holiday, Hdt., Eur. II. to celebrate as or by a festival, Plut.”<sup>9</sup>

#### *Colossians 2:16-17 (King James Version)*

<sup>16</sup>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: <sup>17</sup>Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

The Greek for “judge” is *krino* and it means to condemn, pick apart, prefer, judge. The subject of this verse is “no man.” Don’t allow anyone to judge you or pick

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<sup>5</sup> King James Version

<sup>6</sup> *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

<sup>7</sup> Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

<sup>8</sup> Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>9</sup> Liddell, H. G., and Scott, *Abridged Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 1992.

you apart on how you do the following: observe a holy day, a new moon or the Sabbath.

The word for “in respect of” comes from the Greek *meros* and means “part.” The translation could just as well read: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in part of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”

The words translated “meat and drink” are actually in reference to the physical act of “eating and drinking.” Paul is admonishing the Colossians to not be discouraged by some who were passing judgment on the way the Holy Days, new moons, and Sabbaths were being observed. Paul is referring to eating and drinking on the Holy Days, the New Moons, and the Sabbath days. Clearly, Paul is not opposed to eating and drinking.

*Jewish New Testament* by David Stern on Colossians 2:16—“So don’t let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with eating and drinking, or in regard to a Jewish festival or Rosh-Chodesh or Shabbat. These are a shadow of things that are coming, but the body is of the Messiah.”

Note should be taken of the fact that the judge who passes judgment is not Paul, but the Colossian false teachers who impose “regulations” (2:20) on how to observe these practices in order to achieve “rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body” (2:23).

D.R. DeLacey, writing in the symposium *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, rightly comments: “The judge is likely to be a man of ascetic tendencies who objects to the Colossians eating and drinking.” Presumably the judge, that is, false teachers, wanted the community to observe these practices in a more ascetic way.

Shadow of reality. The holy days, the new moons, and the Sabbaths are all shadows of a deeper spiritual meaning. Paul lists this as on-going. These items *are* shadows. They have not been phased out.

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## THE HOLY DAYS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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**There are five basic arguments against the observance of the Holy Days:**

- Christ fulfilled the Holy Days.
- There is a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. In other words, the New Covenant has no obligation for Christians to observe the Holy Days.
- The Council at Jerusalem in 49 A.D. abrogated the need to observe the Holy Days.
- There is no direct command to observe the Holy Days in the New Testament.
- Paul's writings in general, but specifically Galatians 4:10; Colossians 2:16; and Romans 14:5-6.

### Christ Fulfilled the Holy Days

There are a number of flaws in this argument. Here is a brief outline of the problems:

⇒ There is no scripture that says Christ fulfilled the Holy Days. We are told in Matthew 5:17 that Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill the law. A study of this Greek word translated "fulfill" provides some interesting information.

πληρώ<sup>f</sup>: to give the true or complete meaning to something - 'to give the true meaning to, to provide the real significance of.' 'I did not come to destroy but to give true meaning to' Mt 5:17; 'for the whole Law has its true meaning in one expression, Love your neighbor as yourself' Ga 5:14. In speaking of 'true meaning,' it may be useful in some languages to use a phrase meaning 'real intent' or 'real purpose.'<sup>1</sup>

⇒ The Holy Days were given forever. There is no anticipated end to the Holy Days as listed in the Old Testament. A number of texts in the Old Testament clearly state the Holy Days were ordained forever (Exodus 12:14,17,24; 13:10; Lev. 16:29,31; 23:21,31,41). What needs to be made plain is the meaning of the word "forever," as applied to the Holy Days. Exodus 21:6 and Deuteronomy 15:16-17 make the Bible usage plain. Both of these texts show that "forever," in the Old Testament, means as long as the factors involved continue to exist. In considering the Holy Days, we have much symbolism that has not been accomplished.

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<sup>1</sup> Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

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- ⇒ Christ became our Passover—but the Christians continued to keep the Passover. (I Corinthians 5:7). Christ did not fulfill the Passover, in the sense that it was to be abandoned. He clearly instructed His disciples in what to do on Passover night.
- ⇒ If we accept that Christ fulfilled the Holy Days, therefore ending any need to observe them, then what else did Christ fulfill, by the same reasoning—the Sabbath, the entire law, etc.? If Christ's example cannot be followed (He kept the Holy Days), then we have no basis for any code of conduct or any required observance.
- ⇒ How did Christ fulfill the Feast of Tabernacles? How did Christ fulfill Pentecost? How did Christ fulfill the Feast of Trumpets? How did Christ fulfill the Last Great Day?

### Discontinuity Between the Old and New Testaments

This argument revolves around an understanding of the Covenants.

- ⇒ Most people seem to forget that during the first century there was only one set of scriptures used by the Church—the Old Testament scriptures. The books that we know of today as the New Testament were not canonized until toward the end of the first century and well into the second century.
- ⇒ Paul spoke of the Old Testament scriptures as providing the necessary information for eternal life (II Timothy 3:15-16).
- ⇒ Christ instructed His servants to live by every word of God, which only consisted of the Old Testament at that time (Matthew 4:4).
- ⇒ Israel of old could not keep God's Law, even in the letter. But the fault was not with God or with the Covenant. The fault was with the people (Hebrews 8:8). The New Covenant was given to correct that fault. The entire sermon on the mount clearly shows Jesus did "magnify the law." He brought it up to the spiritual level that God had intended from the beginning. The New Covenant indeed magnified the Old. The New Covenant is not a separate package from the Old, but rather an expansion of the Old Covenant.

### The Council at Jerusalem in 49 A.D.

The account of this council can be found in Acts 15. A thorough study of this chapter does not reveal an abrogation of the Holy Days.

- ⇒ Acts 15 does not even mention the Holy Days. Is it possible that such a sweeping change would be completely ignored?

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⇒ The subject of Acts 15 is circumcision. The Greek text for Acts 15:5 is as follows:

<sup>5</sup> Ἐξανέστησαν δέ τινες τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἵρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων πε πιστευκότες λέγοντες ὅτι δεῖ περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς παραγγέλλειν τ ε τηρεῖν τὸν νόμον Μωϋσέως.<sup>2</sup>

The underlined word, *paraggevllein*, means “to order” or “for the purpose of.” The intent is that Gentiles were to be circumcised in order to fulfill the law of Moses. The subject is clearly circumcision as it is delineated in the law of Moses and not the Law.

⇒ Another translation of Acts 15:5 is as follows: “But some of those who had come to trust were from the party of the P’rushim; and they stood up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them and direct them to observe the Torah of Moshe.’ This is the Jewish New Testament translation.

### No Direct Command in the NT for Observing the Holy Days

This argument has a number of flaws. If we accept this logic, then every principle given in the Old Testament must be confirmed in the New or it is invalid. The New Testament has no list of commandments as are found in the Old. Here are the problems with this logic.

- ⇒ Christ kept the Holy Days and we are told to follow His example (I Peter 2:21). This is very clear in the New Testament. Examples: Luke 2:41-42; John 7:8-10,14,37. His keeping of the Passover and changing the symbols to the bread and wine is ample proof that types may change, but the day itself does not.
- ⇒ When asked about eternal life, Christ referenced the commandments as being necessary in Matthew 19. While the list is not complete, there is no doubt among scholars that Christ was referencing the Ten Commandments. Yet there is no formal listing of the ten in the New Testament. Is it now appropriate to take God’s name in vain, have another god before the true God, or build a graven image?
- ⇒ In John 17:17, we are told that God’s Word is truth. The only scriptures available at this time were the Old Testament scriptures. Christ confirmed that they were true.

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<sup>2</sup> Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, *The Greek New Testament*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1983.



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⇒ If the Holy Days are to be rejected on the grounds that there is no direct command then we must address the question of why did the New Testament Church (which was mostly Gentile by the end of Paul's life) continue to observe the Holy Days. Were they not aware of this substantial change? Notice the references to the Holy Days in the New Testament. We will primarily deal with those references after the death of Christ.

- ◆ There are 43 references to the Holy Days in the New Testament. There are more references in the NT when you consider that it has 1/3 fewer verses than the Old. None of these references remotely implies the doing away of these days.
- ◆ In Matthew 28:18, the English word “keep” is translated from the Greek word ποιέω. Vines has this to say: “ποιεο, ποιέω, (4160), to do, make, signifies to keep, in Matt. 26:18, in the Lord's statement, “I will keep the passover;” so in Acts 18:21, in some mss.; in John 7:19, where the A.V. has “keepeth (the law),” the R.V. adheres to the usual meaning “doeth.”<sup>8</sup>
- ◆ Acts 18:21 is omitted in some manuscripts and translations, but it is included in the King James and the New King James. 95% of the Greek manuscripts contain the statement: “I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.” The word keep is translated from the Greek *poieo*, which means “to keep, celebrate. Note *Analytical Greek Lexicon* by Harper, page 332.
- ◆ In Acts 16:21, the Greek word *poieo* is translated observe. “<sup>21</sup>And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to *observe*, being Romans.”<sup>9</sup> The statements about “keeping” a festival clearly mean to “observe” a festival.
- ◆ Acts 2:1 “<sup>1</sup>And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”<sup>10</sup> This is the first Holy Day that fell after the death of Christ and we find the apostles and the 120 gathered to observe this day. The first Church service in the New Testament era took place on Pentecost, an annual Holy Day.
- ◆ Acts 12:1-4 “<sup>1</sup>Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. <sup>2</sup>Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. <sup>3</sup>And because he saw that it pleased

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<sup>8</sup> Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

<sup>9</sup> *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. <sup>4</sup>So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.”<sup>13</sup> Acts was written by Luke, a Gentile Christian, yet he makes reference to the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Passover. The book of Acts was written to a Gentile audience. Luke actually addresses the book to a Greek named Theophilus.

- ◆ It is interesting that the King James translates the word for Passover as “Easter.” This is clearly an error since the Greek is *pascha* or Passover. But, by inserting the word Easter, we get the clear understanding of the translators. This festival was being observed by the Christians, which was confusing to the translators. Their attempt to substitute Easter in this account is substantiation of the days being observed by the New Testament Church—Passover and Unleavened Bread were clearly in effect.
- ◆ Acts 20:6 “<sup>6</sup>But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.”<sup>14</sup> Given the fact that Luke is writing to a Gentile audience, it makes no sense to include such references unless they are being observed. Luke gives no evidence to the contrary. Harper’s Bible Commentary offers this statement: “Paul’s increasing circle of co-workers (Acts 20:4) now includes persons representing various regions of his gentile mission. Puzzling is the omission of representatives of Achaia (Corinth, Athens). These seven (though perhaps only the two Asians) proceeded to Troas, while Paul and whoever is included in the “us” (v. 5) remained at Philippi, possibly so he could observe the seven-day period of Passover, **thereby indicating further his continued fidelity to Jewish traditions** (v. 6; cf. 18:18; 21:23-26). The mention of Passover dates Paul’s stay in Philippi in the spring.”<sup>15</sup> We have now arrived at a point many years after Christ’s death. This can be dated about 56 A.D., approximately 7 years after the conference in Acts 15 and a number of years after Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians.
- ◆ Acts 20:16 “<sup>16</sup>For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.”<sup>16</sup> The clear

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<sup>13</sup> *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Mays, James Luther, Ph.D., Editor, *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.) 1988.

<sup>16</sup> *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

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implication of this verse is that Paul was planning to observe Pentecost in Jerusalem. Why else would he hurry? The interesting part about this section of scripture is the reference to Paul's speaking on the first day of the week (which was clearly on a Saturday night, Jewish reckoning). This is pointed out by the commentaries as a good example of what was taking place in the New Testament Church. If this be true, then clearly, the New Testament Church continued observing Pentecost.

- ◆ Acts 27:9 “<sup>9</sup>Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them.”<sup>16</sup> The reference to the “Fast” is clearly to the Day of Atonement. All commentaries point out this fact. Was this merely a travelogue being given by Paul and the use of “Fast” only to delineate the season of the year? This would make no sense to a Gentile audience, unless they were also observing this festival.
- ◆ I Corinthians 5:8 “<sup>7</sup>Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.”<sup>17</sup> This verse is very difficult to understand without knowing the Holy Days and their meaning. If this verse is purely symbolic, there is still a very serious problem in understanding why Paul uses these terms. We are well into the second generation of Gentiles in the Church. How would they know about the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, unless they were being observed?
- ◆ I Corinthians 16:8 “<sup>8</sup>But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.”<sup>21</sup> Such a reference to a Holy Day would seem completely out of place unless the New Testament Church was observing such a day.
- ◆ Jude 12 “<sup>12</sup>These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds *they are* without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;”<sup>22</sup> Even at the end of the first century, the Church was clearly observing feasts of some sort. They are called “feasts of charity.” What were these feasts? No one can say with any degree of accuracy. Clearly, these were times when the membership got together in a group to celebrate.

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

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### Paul's Writings Regarding the Holy Days

It is commonly believe that the Apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, gave instructions condemning the observance of the Holy Days. The primary scriptures used to prove this point are Colossians 2:16; Romans 14:5-6; and Galatians 4:9-10. We must examine each of these verses to see just what Paul did say.

⇒ **Colossians 2:16-17** “<sup>16</sup>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*:  
<sup>17</sup>Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.”<sup>23</sup> This section of scripture has been used since the time of the middle ages to show that the Holy Days are not necessary for Christians. Is this what Paul meant?

- ◆ The Greek for “judge” is *krino* (κρίνω) and it means to condemn, pick apart, prefer, judge. The subject of this verse is “no man.” Don’t allow anyone to judge you or pick you apart on how you do the following: observe a holy day, a new moon or the Sabbath.
- ◆ The word for “in respect of” comes from the Greek *meros* and means “part.” The translation could just as well read: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in part of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”
- ◆ The words translated “meat and drink” are actually in reference to the physical act of “eating and drinking.” Paul is admonishing the Colossians to not be discouraged by some who were passing judgment on the way the Holy Days, new moons, and Sabbaths were being observed. Paul is referring to eating and drinking on the Holy Days, the New Moons, and the Sabbath days. Clearly, Paul is not opposed to eating and drinking.
- ◆ *Jewish New Testament* by David Stern on Colossians 2:16—“So don’t let anyone pass judgment on you in connection with eating and drinking, or in regard to a Jewish festival or Rosh-Chodesh or Shabbat. These are a shadow of things that are coming, but the body is of the Messiah.”
- ◆ Note should be taken of the fact that the judge who passes judgment is not Paul, but the Colossian false teachers who impose “regulations” (2:20) on how to observe these practices in order to achieve “rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body” (2:23).
- ◆ D.R. DeLacey, writing in the symposium *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, rightly comments: “The judge is likely to be a man o of ascetic tendencies who objects to the Colossians eating and drinking.”

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<sup>23</sup> *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

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Presumably the judge, that is, false teachers, wanted the community to observe these practices in a more ascetic way.

- ◆ Shadow of reality. There are two possible explanations. First, the shadow is pictured by the false regulations that the Colossian teachers wanted to see instituted. The other possibility is that the holy days, the new moons, and the sabbaths are all shadows of a deeper spiritual meaning. Paul lists this as on-going. These items are shadows. They have not been phased out.

⇒ **Romans 14:5-6** “<sup>5</sup>One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.” <sup>24</sup> To understand this section of scripture we must get the context.

- ◆ In Romans 14, Paul distinguishes between two types of believers: the strong, who believed “he may eat anything” and the weak who ate only “vegetables” and drank no wine (Rom 14:2,21). Can the Old Testament Holy Days be legitimately read into this passage? The answer is no.
- ◆ The conflict here is over diet and days which cannot be traced back to the Mosaic Law. This law is not at stake because nowhere does the Mosaic law prescribe strict vegetarianism, total abstinence from wine, or a preference over days presumably for fasting.
- ◆ The Greek word *koinos* is used in this chapter. It means common and is not the same word that is translated “unclean.” Apparently the dispute was over meat which was lawful to eat but because of its association with idol worship was regarded as *koinos*, common, that is, not fit for human consumption.
- ◆ The whole discussion in Romans 14 is not about freedom to observe the law versus freedom from its observance, but concerns unessential scruples of conscience dictated not by divine precepts but by human conventions and superstitions.
- ◆ Paul applies the basic principle “observe it in honor of the Lord” (14:6) only to the case of the person “who observes the day.” He never says the opposite, namely, “the man who esteems all days alike, esteems them in honor of the Lord.” In other words, with regard to diet, Paul teaches that one can honor the Lord both by eating and by abstaining

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<sup>24</sup> *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

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## THE HOLY DAYS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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(14:6), but with regard to days, he does not even concede that the person who regards all the days alike does so to the Lord.

- ◆ It is generally presumed that the “weak” believer was the one who observed the Holy Days. Paul would have to classify himself with the weak, since he observed the Sabbath and other Jewish feasts.
- ◆ The preference over days in Romans has to do with fast days rather than feast days, since the context deals with abstinence from meat and wine (Rom. 14:2,6,21).

⇒ **Galatians 4:8-10** <sup>8</sup>Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. <sup>9</sup>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? <sup>10</sup>Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. <sup>11</sup>I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”<sup>25</sup> The question here revolves around which days Paul was making reference to. Are these veiled references to the Holy Days?

- ◆ Some view this as a condemnation of the observance of the Holy Days. Was Paul referring to the Holy Days as superstition? What about bondage? Does it seem reasonable that an apostle, who kept the Holy Days, would refer to them as superstitions?
- ◆ One must understand that these were primarily Gentile churches in Asia Minor. Although there were some Jews in the mix, most had come out of some sort of pagan religion.
- ◆ The key to understanding this section is the reference to having not known God. This could not be a reference to the Jews, since we are told that they were given the oracles of God to preserve (Romans 3:1-2). To turn back to something implies that you were once there.
- ◆ Notice the word “again” found twice in Galatians 4:9. These Gentiles were turning again to “weak and beggarly elements,” desiring again to be in bondage.
- ◆ A *Greek-English Lexicon*, by Arndt and Gingrich (page 266), states the following of *eniautos* (year) in Galatians 4:10—“The meaning of *eniautos* in the combination *kairoi kai eniautoi* in Gal. 4:10 is not certain. It could be an allusion to the so-called ‘sabbatical years’ (Lev 25), but it may also mean certain days of the year. . . as the New Year festival.” Those who say that “days, months, times, and years” refers to God’s Holy Days are simply interpreting.

⇒ Conclusions about Paul’s writings. These books (Galatians, Colossians, Romans) were all written by Paul. Peter makes mention of Paul’s writings:

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<sup>25</sup> *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

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“. . . Paul, also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (II Peter 3:15-16). We must be careful that we don’t misunderstand Paul’s writings. Peter warned us about this.

- ◆ Galatians, Colossians, and Romans are not the places to begin when doing a study to determine a particular doctrine.
- ◆ Galatians, Colossians, and Romans do not do away with God’s law or they would contradict the rest of the Bible. Scripture does not contradict itself.
- ◆ If Paul taught the abrogation of God’s Law, Sabbath, and Holy Days, then Paul preached one thing and practiced another. Paul clearly kept the Sabbath and the Holy Days. He did not teach one thing and do another.
- ◆ Hebrews 9:10 clearly shows that “. . . meats and drinks (offerings), and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation.” The New Testament clearly delineates what was changed or abrogated with the death of Christ. Why is the Bible so plain on the washings and yet there is no mention of the Holy Days?

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# FESTIVALS REVIEW SHEET

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1. List the seven festivals in order.
2. List the seven Holy Days in order.
3. What is the only chapter in the Bible where all the festivals and Holy Days are listed?
4. No work at all is to be done (not even food preparation) on which Holy Day?
5. Where is the prophecy in the Bible showing that the Feast of Tabernacles will be observed in the Millennium?
6. Christ observed the Sabbath and the festivals as part of His “custom.” Where do we find this statement in the Bible?
7. Why does John use the term “Feast of the Jews” when the others do not?
8. Does Colossians 2 do away with the Festivals? Please explain.
9. What was the issue that led to the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council?
10. Does Romans 14 do away with the Holy Days? Please explain.