

Should You Keep God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?

Do you know where various holy days and holidays came from?



*"When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord
In one place." (Acts 2:1)*

Bob Thiel, Ph.D.

Should You Keep
God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?

By Bob Thiel, Ph.D.

Are God's feast days listed in the Bible?

Which days did Jesus keep?

Which days did the Apostles keep?

Which days did the early followers of Christ keep?

Do you observe any holidays?

Do you know where they came from?

Do you know why you and others may observe them?

Do any have religious connotations?

Might you be observing demonic holidays?

Does it matter to God what days you may keep?

If you believe that you are Christian, are you possibly celebrating demonic or pagan ones that Jesus would condemn? If so, does the truth matter enough to you that you would follow Jesus on this?

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Credits: Cover photo taken at Day of Pentecost in New Zealand by
Joyce Thiel. Various translations of the Bible are used throughout;
where no name nor abbreviation is given, then the New King James

Version (NKJV) is being cited (Thomas Nelson, Copyright © 1997; used by permission).

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1. Holy Days vs. Popular Holidays

Of the numerous groups who profess Christianity, virtually all observe some holidays or Holy Days.

Should you observe God's Holy Days or demonic holidays?

It seems like an easy question with an easy answer. And for those willing to believe the Bible, instead of various crowds, it is.

Where did the Holy Days and holidays come from? Do they come from the Bible or are they related to traditional pagan/demonic observations?

If you believe that you are a Christian, do you really know what days, if any, you should keep and why?

This short book focuses on the annual biblical Holy Days and has information on some of the annual holidays that others observe.

The Word *Holiday*

According to *Webster's* dictionary, the word *holiday* originally came from the Old English *hāligdæg*.¹ Despite what people now seem to think, that term did not actually mean time off to have a vacation—holiday meant *holy day*.

Of course, not all 'holidays' were intended as religious holy days. National holidays were not necessarily considered to be religious, and even Jesus apparently observed one or more of those (John 10:22-23).

As far as Jesus goes, the Bible specifically records that He observed biblical Holy Days and festivals such as Passover (Luke 2:41-42; 22:7-19), the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:10-26), and the Last Great Day (John 7:37-38; 8:2). The New Testament points to Jesus' apostles

¹ holiday. *Websters New World Dictionary*, 2nd college edition. 1974, p. 669

keeping Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:8), Pentecost (Acts 2:1-14), Trumpets and Tabernacles (cf. Leviticus 23:24,33-37; Acts 18:21; 21:18-24; 28:17), and the Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9).

The Bible never shows that Jesus nor the apostles observed religious holidays like the ones that the pagan Romans observed. Yet, many who claim Christianity as their religion observe versions of religious holidays that come from sources outside the Bible.

Should they be kept?

The Bible prophesies that the time will come when people of all nations will keep God's Holy Days or be subject to drought and plagues (Zechariah 14:16-19). Since that is the case, shouldn't you consider whether you should do so now?

Please read this book in its entirety at least twice. Certain objections that some have raised about what the Bible shows are addressed within it. A double-read will hopefully answer the more serious questions you may have.

Please try to study this topic with a truly open mind. It is natural for all humans, if we are not on our guard against it, to look upon any presentation of these annual Holy Days in a spirit of prejudice. The Bible teaches that "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (Proverbs 18:13), so be like the Bereans of old to see if these things here are so (Acts 17:10-11).

Let us, therefore, in willing submission to God and His will, with yielded hearts free from prejudice, with open minds desiring truth more than our own way, trembling before the sacred and holy Word of God (Isaiah 66:2), ask God humbly for the direction of His Holy Spirit. And in this prayerful, submissive, willing, yet careful and cautious attitude, study this matter — proving all things (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 KJV/DRB).

God's Festivals and Holy Days

Did you know that God’s festivals are listed in the Bible? While this should be common sense, many do not realize that this is so, nor where to find them in scripture.

Furthermore, one issue with them is that they are based on a different calendar than most people now use. God’s calendar is basically a lunar-solar one. To help you better understand the timing of God’s Holy Days, check out the following comparison chart of the biblical calendar and the Roman (Gregorian) calendar (they do not fall on the same Roman calendar day each year):

Month	Number	Length	Civil Equivalent
Abib/Nisan	1	30 days	March-April
Ziv/Iyar	2	29 days	April-May
Sivan/Siwan	3	30 days	May-June
Tammuz	4	29 days	June-July
Av/Ab	5	30 days	July-August
Elul	6	29 days	August-September
Ethanim/Tishri	7	30 days	September-October
Bul/Cheshvan	8	29 or 30 days	October-November
Kislev	9	30 or 29 days	November-December
Tevet	10	29 days	December-January
Shevat	11	30 days	January-February
Adar	12	30 days	February-March

(A modern Roman calendar with the Holy Days is shown at this booklet’s end.)

As far as God's Holy Days, let's first start with a reference in the Book of Genesis, showing both a Protestant and a Catholic translation:

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs and will mark religious festivals, days, and years. (Genesis 1:14, God's Word Translation, GWT)

¹⁴ God said, 'Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night, and let them indicate festivals, days and years. (Genesis 1:14, New Jerusalem Bible, NJB)

The Hebrew word *mowed'* in the verse 14 refers to a religious festival.

Did you know that the Bible talked about the existence of religious festivals in its very first book? The Book of Psalms also confirms this is basically why God made the moon:

¹⁹ He made the moon to mark the festivals (Psalm 104:19, Holman Christian Standard Bible)

Is this something you had heard before?

What are the religious festivals that the "lights in the sky" God placed there were to mark?

Well, there is one place in the Bible where all the Holy Days (*mowed'*) are listed and certain lights are mentioned.

It is in a part of the Bible that many wish to overlook, or conclude has been done away in its entirety. The following is shown from the New American Bible (NAB), a Roman Catholic translation (the NAB is used below as most Protestants follow the Church of Rome regarding many of the days they do and do not observe, despite what scripture states):

²... The following are the festivals of the LORD, which you shall declare holy days. These are my festivals:

³ For six days work may be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest, a declared holy day; you shall do no work. It is the LORD's sabbath wherever you dwell.

⁴ These are the festivals of the LORD, holy days which you shall declare at their proper time. ⁵ The Passover of the LORD falls on the fourteenth day of the first month, at the evening twilight. ⁶ The fifteenth day of this month is the LORD's feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. ⁷ On the first of these days you will have a declared holy day; you shall do no heavy work. (Leviticus 23:2-7, NAB)

¹⁵ Beginning with the day after the sabbath, the day on which you bring the sheaf for elevation, you shall count seven full weeks; ¹⁶ you shall count to the day after the seventh week, fifty days. (Leviticus 23:15-16, NAB)

²⁴... On the first day of the seventh month you will have a sabbath rest, with trumpet blasts as a reminder, a declared holy day; (Leviticus 23:24, NAB)

²⁶ The LORD said to Moses: ²⁷ Now the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. You will have a declared holy day. You shall humble yourselves and offer an oblation to the LORD. ²⁸ On this day you shall not do any work, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD, your God. ²⁹ Those who do not humble themselves on this day shall be cut off from the people. ³⁰ If anyone does any work on this day, I will remove that person from the midst of the people. ³¹ You shall do no work; this is a perpetual statute throughout your generations wherever you dwell; ³² it is a sabbath of complete rest for you. You shall humble yourselves. Beginning on the evening of the ninth of the month, you shall keep your sabbath from evening to evening.

³³ The LORD said to Moses: ³⁴ Tell the Israelites: The fifteenth day of this seventh month is the LORD's feast of Booths,

which shall continue for seven days. ³⁵ On the first day, a declared holy day, you shall do no heavy work. ³⁶ For seven days you shall offer an oblation to the LORD, and on the eighth day you will have a declared holy day. You shall offer an oblation to the LORD. It is the festival closing. You shall do no heavy work.

³⁷ These, therefore, are the festivals of the LORD... (Leviticus 23:26-37, NAB)

The Bible clearly lists God's festivals and God's Holy Days. Yet, most people who claim to be Christian do not truly keep the Holy Days that God commands.

Note: A full day in the Bible ran from sunset-to-sunset (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; Deuteronomy 16:6; 23:11; Joshua 8:29; Mark 1:32), not from midnight to midnight as days are counted today. Also note that while there are aspects of observances associated with the Holy Days in the Old Testament that have been changed for Christians as the New Testament helps make clear— e.g. Matthew 26:18, 26-30; Hebrews 10:1-14--the reality is that these days and festivals still exist and were kept by early Christians,² including Gentile ones.³

We in the *Continuing Church of God* keep the same biblical holy days that Jesus, His disciples, and their faithful followers kept, including Gentile Christian leaders like Polycarp of Smyrna. We keep them in the manner that early and later Christians kept them. This differs in certain ways from the same basic days that the Jews keep, as the Jews do not accept the New Testament teachings on what all these days mean or how they are to be kept by Christians.

Many Christians that observe God's festivals realize that the *biblical* Holy Days point towards the first and second coming of Jesus as well as help picture God's plan of salvation.

2 Pines S. The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity according to a New Source. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Volume II, No.13; 1966. Jerusalem, pp. 14

3 Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter 24 verses 2-7, pp. 114-115; Migne JP Argumentum Patrologia Latina Volumen MPL025 Ab Columna ad Culumnam 1415 - 1542A, pp. 922, 930

2. Passover: Is It Only About Christ's Death?

Should Christians keep the Passover?

As many are aware, the children of Israel were specifically told to observe the Passover in the Book of Exodus. Families took a lamb, without blemish (Exodus 12:5), for the sacrifice (Exodus 12:3-4). The lamb was sacrificed on the fourteenth at twilight (Exodus 12:6) and some of its blood was placed upon the door of the family's home (Exodus 12:7).

Those who took the steps God instructed were 'passed over' from death, whereas the Egyptians who did not do this were not (Exodus 12:28-30).

As many realize, Jesus kept the Passover annually (Exodus 13:10) from the time of His youth (Luke 2:41-42) and throughout His entire life (Luke 22:15).

Passover was observed on the fourteenth day of the month of the first month (Leviticus 23:5; called Abib in Deuteronomy 16:1 or Nisan in Esther 3:7). It occurs in the Spring season of the year.

Although Jesus changed several practices associated with it (Luke 22:19-22; John 13:1-17), our Savior also told His disciples to keep it (Luke 22:7-13). Also the New Testament is clear, that because of Jesus' sacrifice, killing sheep and putting blood on doorposts (Exodus 12:6-7) is not needed anymore (cf. Hebrews 7:12-13,26-27; 9:11-28).

The Apostle Paul specifically taught that Christians were to keep Passover in accordance with Jesus' instructions (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 11:23-26).

The Bible teaches that Jesus “was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20) to be “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Thus, God’s plan of salvation through His Holy Days and festivals, including Jesus being the “Passover lamb,” was known before humans were placed on the planet. That is why some of the celestial bodies were placed in the heavens to be able to

calculate them!

Pretty much all churches recognize that the Bible teaches that Jesus fulfilled something associated with Passover when He was killed.

We find the operation of this great Sacrifice even discussed in the Garden of Eden. After Jesus was prophesied (Genesis 3:15), God killed an animal (probably a lamb or goat), in order to cover the nakedness (a representation of a type of sin in this incidence) of Adam and Eve with its skins (Genesis 3:21). We also see this principle of sacrifice operating when Abel sacrificed a lamb from his flock (Genesis 4:2-4).

The famous Passover in the days of Moses showed the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 12:1-38). Moses recorded God’s instructions about this as well as the calendar (Genesis 1:14; 2:1; Exodus 12:1) and His feasts (Leviticus 23). The Passover basically became the first of these events annually picturing to God's children His great plan of salvation.

In the Old Testament, the Passover pictured deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and God’s intervention. But, prophetically, it was also looking towards the time that Jesus would come and be our Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29; cf. 3:16-17).

On Jesus’ last Passover as a human being, He continued to keep it at the time of the late evening and told His disciples to keep it (Luke 22:14-19; cf. John 13:2,12-15) and on the 14th of Nisan/Abib (cf. Luke 22:14; 23:52-54).

Jesus, however, changed several of the practices associated with its observance. Jesus made the unleavened bread and wine an integral part of Passover (Matthew 26:18, 26-30) and added the practice of footwashing (John 13:12-17).

Jesus in no way taught that it was not to be an annual Passover, nor did He change the time of day of its observation to a Sunday morning like those who follow Greco-Roman traditions do. Even Greek Orthodox scholars admit that 1st and 2nd century Christians kept Passover at night⁴ like we in the *Continuing Church of God* do in the 21st century. Passover is only to be taken by properly baptized Christians (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29; Romans 6:3-10; Exodus 12:48; Numbers 9:14).

It probably should be added that the Church of Rome (as well as many of its Protestant descendants) officially teaches that it keeps Passover, though calling it something different in the English language and not keeping it as Jesus did.⁵

Wine, Not Grape Juice

Despite the fact that Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:3-10) and the Greek term used in the New Testament (*oinos*) refers to wine (cf. 1 Timothy 3:8), various ones have claimed that it was grape juice, and not wine, that was used for Passover. The Jews, themselves though, use wine at Passover.⁶

How do we know that grape juice was not possibly used by Jesus?

Grapes are normally harvested around September and Passover is usually in the Roman calendar month called April. In Jesus' day, they did not have modern sterilization or refrigeration. Hence, grape juice would have spoiled between the time of harvest and Passover.

4 Calivas, Alkiviadis C. *The Origins of Pascha and Great Week - Part I*. Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

5 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Imprimatur Potest +Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Doubleday, NY 1995, p. 332

⁶ Hirsch EG, Eisenstein JD. Wine. *Jewish Encyclopedia*. 1907, pp. 532-535

Others have noted that it was IMPOSSIBLE for Jews to have stored grape juice that long.⁷ Therefore, only wine, which can remain unspoiled for even many years would have been used. (The use of alcohol, like wine, is endorsed during the Feast of Tabernacles in Deuteronomy 26:14, but not required.)

Christians are not to be “drunk with wine, wherein is excess” as Paul wrote (Ephesians 5:18, KJV). Only a very small amount of wine is normally consumed at Passover (about a teaspoon full or less).

Passover Was on the 14th Not the 15th

Some have been confused about the date of the biblical Passover.

The Bible teaches that it was to be kept on the 14th day of the first month of God’s calendar (Leviticus 23:5).

In the 6th verse of Exodus Chapter 12, it states that the lamb is to be killed “at dusk” (GWT and Jewish Publication Society translations). The 8th verse says that they are to eat the flesh that night. It is to be roasted and eaten that night. And, yes as one who has killed lambs, one can easily kill, roast, and eat a lamb ‘of the first year’ (Exodus 12:5) between sunset and midnight—which is basically what the children of Israel did on the recorded Passover in Exodus 12. And technically, they had until morning to have eaten it per Exodus 12:10. Now the Bible is clear that the angelic Passover occurred “on that night” (Exodus 12:12), the same night of the 14th.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was only to be sacrificed once (1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 9:28; 10:10-14). In the New Testament, it is clear that Jesus kept His final Passover (Luke 22:14-16), and was killed. The Bible shows that Jesus was removed from the stake prior to the 15th. Why? Because the 15th was a “high day” (John 19:28-31), specifically the first day of unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:6). Hence, Jesus kept and fulfilled the Passover on the 14th.

⁷ Cf. Kennedy ARS. Hastings Bible Dictionary. C. Scribner Son’s, 1909 p. 974

Early church history also records that Passover was kept on the 14th of month of Nisan by faithful Jewish and Gentile Christian leaders in the first, second, and third centuries⁸ and that it was kept in the evening.⁹

Most leaders who profess Christ claim to observe some version of Passover, though many have changed the name, the date, the time, the symbols, and the meaning (see Easter section in chapter 10).

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ was the Passover lamb sacrificed for us and that we are to keep that Feast with unleavened bread:

⁷ Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8, NAB)

Notice that the feast is to be kept with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The Apostle Paul realized that Jesus was a substitute for the Passover lamb that the Jewish people used. He also taught that Christians should still continue to observe Passover.

But basically how were Christians to do this?

The Apostle Paul explains:

²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." ²⁵ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you

8 Eusebius. Church History, Book V, Chapter 24

9 Calivas, Alkiviadis C. The Origins of Pascha and Great Week - Part I. Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

drink it, in remembrance of Me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

So, the Apostle Paul taught that Christians were to keep the Passover in the manner that Jesus observed His final Passover with the bread and wine. And that was at night as remembrance or memorial--a memorial is an annual, not a weekly event.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* correctly notes that "Jesus chose

the time of the Passover... took bread, and...he broke it" and also gave it to be eaten.¹⁰

It is documented in the Bible that Jesus broke unleavened bread and passed it to His followers to eat. Jesus also passed the wine to His followers to drink a small amount. We in the *Continuing Church of God* pray, break and distribute unleavened bread, and distribute wine for His faithful followers to consume. Yet, the Church of Rome (like many others) no longer breaks unleavened bread (it uses a whole 'host') nor does it *usually* distribute wine for its followers to drink (the distribution of wine is considered optional by the Church of Rome, and it is often not done in Protestant churches).

What About 'As Often...You Proclaim'?

How often should Passover be taken?

Jesus stated, "**For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.**"

Consider that it is Jesus' *death* that this commemorates.

Christ's death reconciles us to God (Romans 5:10) and Jesus gave His life for our salvation (John 3:16-17; Hebrews 5:5-11). His death teaches us that Christians are not to have sin reign over our mortal

10 Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1339, p. 373

bodies (Romans 6:3-12). The Christian Passover is the *annual* commemoration of Jesus' death.

Jesus DID NOT say to do this ceremony AS OFTEN AS YOU DESIRE, only that when you do it, you are proclaiming His death. The Greek term for often in 1 Corinthians 11:26, *hosakis*, is used one other time in the New Testament. It does not mean as often as you desire UNLESS the Greek term for "you desire," *thelo* or *ethelo*, is also present (which it is in Revelation 11:6; the only other place in the Bible this particular term is used). However, since this is NOT present in 1 Corinthians 11:26, Paul is NOT telling us to observe the Lord's Passover as often as WE desire, but that when we are observing it on Passover, it is not just

a ceremony, it is showing Christ's death.

Furthermore, Paul wrote this:

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. (1 Corinthians 11:27-29)

Paul is clearly teaching that to take this bread and wine, one must examine oneself. The deleavening that is supposed to accompany Passover helps us focus on our faults and sins, and thus helps fulfill this command from Paul to examine ourselves. As deleavening can take lots of effort, this also supports the concept of an annual examination (people were not removing leaven every day or week).

The New Testament records that both Jesus and Paul taught to observe the Passover in the Christian manner. And that was an annual observation.

Footwashing

Footwashing helps show humility and that even the followers of Christ still tend to have areas that need to be cleansed (cf. John 13:10).

Jesus taught that His followers should do this:

¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:13-17)

Relatively few who profess Christianity wash feet like Jesus said to do.

But we in the *Continuing Church of God* follow Jesus' instructions on this annually.

Sources Outside of Scripture

It is not just in the Bible that we see that Passover was kept annually by Christians. History records that the faithful kept Passover annually on the 14th from the time of the original apostles and throughout the ages.¹¹

There is some interesting information in the corrupted text known as *The Life of Polycarp*.¹² What is interesting is that it suggests that the Passover observation in Asia Minor may not have first come to Smyrna from the Apostle John, but even earlier from the Apostle Paul.¹³

11 Thiel B. *Continuing History of the Church of God*. 2nd edition. Nazarene Books, 2016

12 This document seems to be based upon writings in the second century, but the extant version we now see contains information/changes that seem to be added in the fourth century; see Monroy MS. *The Church of Smyrna: History and Theology of a Primitive Christian Community*. Peter Lang edition, 2015, p. 31

13 Pionius. *Life of Polycarp*, Chapter 2. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp.488-506

The Life of Polycarp suggests that New Covenant Passover with unleavened bread and wine was to be observed during the season of unleavened bread. It states that heretics did it another way. And that writing is also supportive of the idea that the unleavened bread AND wine were taken, and were taken ANNUALLY.

History records that the biblically-listed apostles (including Philip and John) as well as Bishops/Pastors Polycarp, Thraseas, Sagaris, Papirius, Melito, Polycrates, Apollinaris, and others kept the Passover annually on the 14th.¹⁴ The Roman, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican Catholics all consider those leaders to have been saints, yet none of those faiths follow their examples on this.

Bishop/Pastor Apollinaris of Hierapolis in Phrygia of Asia Minor wrote around 180 A.D. telling Christians to keep Passover on the 14th:

The fourteenth day, the true Passover of the Lord; the great sacrifice, the Son of God instead of the lamb, who was bound ... and who was buried on the day of the passover, the stone being placed upon the tomb.¹⁵

Jesus ate and kept the Passover on the 14th, was killed on the 14th, and was buried on the 14th. This was not on the 15th, and in the year of His death, this was NOT on a Sunday. Jesus would have taken the Passover just after sunset and would be killed during daylight and be buried before the sun set again (to start a new day).

In the late second century, Bishop/Pastor Polycrates of Ephesus sent a letter to the Roman Bishop Victor when Victor tried to force the observance of Passover on a Sunday instead of the 14th.

In his letter, Polycrates:

14 Eusebius. *The History of the Church*, Book V, Chapter 24 verses 2-7, pp. 114-115; Apollinaris. From the *Book Concerning Passover*. Translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Excerpted from Volume I of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, editors; American Edition copyright © 1885
15 Apollinaris. From the *Book Concerning Passover*

- 1) Said he was following the teachings passed on from the Apostle John.
- 2) Said that he was being faithful to the teachings of the Gospel.
- 3) Relied on the position that teachings from the Bible were above those of Roman-accepted tradition.
- 4) Said he was being faithful to the teachings passed down to him by earlier church leaders.
- 5) Showed he was then the spokesperson for the faithful in Asia Minor.
- 6) Said he and his predecessors observed the time of unleavened bread.
- 7) Refused to accept the authority of a non-biblical Roman tradition over the Bible.
- 8) Refused to accept the authority of the Bishop of Rome--he preferred to be separate (cf. Revelation 18:4).
- 9) Stated that his life was to be governed by Jesus and not opinions of men.¹⁶

16 Polycrates wrote, "We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord's coming, when he shall come with glory from heaven, and shall seek out all the saints. Among these are Philip, one of the twelve apostles, who fell asleep in Hierapolis; and his two aged virgin daughters, and another daughter, who lived in the Holy Spirit and now rests at Ephesus; and, moreover, John, who was both a witness and a teacher, who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord, and, being a priest, wore the sacerdotal plate. He fell asleep at Ephesus. And Polycarp in Smyrna, who was a bishop and martyr; and Thraseas, bishop and martyr from Eumenia, who fell asleep in Smyrna. Why need I mention the bishop and martyr Sagaris who fell asleep in Laodicea, or the blessed Papirius, or Melito, the Eunuch who lived altogether in the Holy Spirit, and who lies in Sardis, awaiting the episcopate from heaven, when he shall rise from the dead? All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said ' We ought to obey God rather than man'...I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus"

Eusebius, The History of the Church, Book V, Chapter 24 verses 2-7, pp. 114-115

Would you follow the example of Jesus and the Apostles like Polycrates did?

Because early Christians kept Passover on the 14th, they and others who did so were labeled Quartodecimans (Latin for *fourteenths*) by many historians.

The early Christians realized that Passover had to do with God's plan of salvation. Notice that by 180 A.D., Bishop/Pastor Melito of Sardis wrote:

Now comes the mystery of the passover, even as it stands written in the law...The people, therefore, became the model for the church, and the law a parabolic sketch. But the gospel became the explanation of the law and its fulfillment, while the church became the storehouse of truth...This one is the passover of our salvation. This is the one who patiently endured many things in many people...This is the one who became human in a virgin, who was hanged on the tree, who was buried in the earth, who was resurrected from among the dead, and who raised mankind up out of the grave below to the heights of heaven. This is the lamb that was slain.¹⁷

Passover was kept annually on the 14th of Nisan by the faithful and others in later centuries. Catholic scholars record this occurred in the 4th,¹⁸ 5th,¹⁹ 6th-8th²⁰ and later centuries. Various Church of God writers have traced its observance from the time of the apostles to modern times.²¹

17 Melito. Homily On the Passover. Verses 11, 40,46-47, 58-72. Translation from Kerux: The Journal of Online Theology, <http://www.kerux.com/documents/KeruxV4N1A1.asp> 09/14/05

18 Epiphanius. The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis, Books II and III (Sects 47-80)

19 Socrates Scholasticus. Ecclesiastical History, Book V, Chapter XXII. Excerpted from Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. American Edition, 1890). Epiphanius. Section IV, Verses 1,3;1,6;2,6. EJ Brill, New York, 1994, pp. 23-25

20 Bede (Monk). The Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Oxford University Press, NY, 1999, pp. 152-159

21 e.g. Dugger AN, Dodd CO. A History of True Religion, 3rd ed. Jerusalem, 1972 (Church of God, 7th Day). Thiel B. Continuing History of the Church of God. Nazarene Books, 2016

Greco-Roman scholars recognize that aspects of Passover, like footwashing, were also observed by those they considered to be early faithful Christians.²²

Passover is the first annual feast listed in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus.

Passover helps picture salvation and grace for Christians. It should be noted that early Christian writings most often refer to it as the Passover and not “the Lord’s Supper.”

While some may ‘spiritualize’ away the necessity of Passover’s observance, leaders considered to be saints by the Greco-Romans and the Church of God did keep it literally.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God still do so today.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God keep Passover and include the historical, and biblical, practice of washing one another’s feet.

The Plan from the Beginning

Passover shows that God had a plan before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) to send Jesus to die for our sins, that God loves us (John 3:16), that God can deliver us, and that His Son suffered and died for us. Passover shows that Christians are freed from sin by His death and not to remain in sin (Romans 6:1-5).

But simply accepting the sacrifice of Jesus is not all there is to God’s plan of salvation.

Various people keep the beginning of God's feasts of salvation by somewhat recognizing Passover and/or Pentecost, but never go on to know the “depth of the riches” (cf. Romans 11:33) of God's grace (2 Peter 3:18) pictured by the other biblical feasts.

22 Thurston, H. (1912). Washing of Feet and Hands. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company; Hardinge, Leslie. *The Celtic Church in Britain*. Teach Services, Brushton (NY) 2000, pp. 111,116

Christ is not only the author/beginner of our salvation (Hebrews 5:9), but is also the finisher of our salvation (Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 1:1-9). His true followers keep His Spring and Fall Holy Days.

3. The Night to Be Observed and the Days of Unleavened Bread

The Bible indicates that Egypt was a type of sin from which the children of Israel had to be delivered (cf. Exodus 13:3; Revelation 11:8). The Bible shows that Christians today live in a world which is a type of spiritual “Babylon” (Revelation 17:1-6). The Bible shows that Christians will relatively soon be delivered from it *after* God pours out His plagues upon Babylon (Revelation 18:1-8). Several of the plagues listed in the Book of Revelation are similar to those once used in Egypt before God’s people were delivered.

The children of Israel left Egypt on the First day of Unleavened Bread.

The Bible, in Leviticus 23:7-8 teaches that both the first and last days of unleavened bread are times for a holy “convocation” (NKJV), a “sacred assembly” (NJB). The evening of the fifteenth of Nisan (which begins that holy day) begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which involved eating (cf. Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:6).

The Bible records the following:²³

⁴² It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations. (Exodus 12:42, KJV)

For Christians, the Night to Be Observed pictures our taking action to leave spiritual Egypt (cf. Revelation 11:8)--this is something that should cause Christians to rejoice.

Historically, the Night to Be Observed normally involved a festive dinner. The dinner normally included, but was not limited to, unleavened bread.

²³ The Catholic *Original Douay Rheims* renders this: “This is the observable night of our Lord, when he brought them forth out of the Land of Ægypt: this night all the children of Israel must observe in their generations.”

The Bulk of the Jews Call the 15th Passover

Jewish leaders changed the date and some of their practices associated with Passover. Some rabbinical sources suggest this was because they did not want to keep it the same as the faithful Christians.²⁴

But also, probably because of a consumption of a meal on the Night to Be Observed and certain traditions, combined with how the Jews tended to deal with the holy days because of the diaspora (the Jews outside the land of Israel) and calendar issues,²⁵ Jews tend to call the Night to Be Observed the Passover as most Jews keep it the evening of the 15th of Nisan/Abib. Some keep both the 14th and the 15th as Passover.

At the time of Jesus, the Sadducees tended to keep Passover on the 14th and the Pharisees on the 15th.²⁶

Yet, the Bible teaches the two different times are for two different purposes. The Old Testament Passover shows that the children of Israel were protected and did not suffer from the death angel. The New Testament Passover shows, for Christians, that Jesus bore the penalty for our sins Himself through His death.

But, the Night to Be Observed reminded the Jews that they should be thankful for God's deliverance from the bondage of Egyptian slavery (Exodus 12:42). For Christians, the Night to Be Observed teaches we are to rejoice and be thankful for the release Jesus provides from the bondage of sin (John 8:34-36).

Certain Jewish scholars do realize that the Bible lists Passover as being at a different date than the festival of unleavened bread.²⁷

²⁴ Wolf G. Lexical and Historical Contributions on the Biblical and Rabbinic Passover. G. Wolf, 1991

²⁵ Holy Days. Jewish Encyclopedia of 1906.

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7828-holy-days> viewed 09/04/14

²⁶ Rabbi Jeffrey W. Goldwasser. Why do Jews in America have two Passover Seders?

http://judaism.about.com/od/holidayssabbath/f/seders_two.htm viewed 04/06/09

²⁷ Passover. Jewish Encyclopedia of 1906, states "Lev. xxiii., however, seems to distinguish between Passover, which is set for the fourteenth day of the month, and (the Festival of

Therefore, despite most Jews calling what they keep on the 15th as Passover, the 15th is biblically considered to be part of the seven day festival of unleavened bread. Because Jews tend to emphasize the departure from Egypt and rely on certain non-biblical traditions, they tend to mostly observe only the second date.

Exodus chapter 12 discusses Passover and begins with God instructing Moses and Aaron about what they were to teach the people as well as what was going to happen. This instruction included the taking out of a lamb on the tenth day of this first month, called Abib, and saving it up until the 14th day when it was to be killed at twilight — the beginning of the 14th.

Notice something from the following instructions about the Passover:

²¹ Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Pick out and take lambs for yourselves according to your families, and kill the Passover lamb. ²² And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning. (Exodus 12:21-22)

The expression “until morning” comes from Hebrew word meaning “the breaking through of daylight,” “coming of daylight,” or the “coming of sunrise.”

So, Israelites did not go out of their homes until after dawn on the 14th. What happened earlier that night?

²⁹ And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of livestock... ³³ And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead."

Unleavened Bread; ἐορτή τῶν ἀζύμων, Luke xxii. 1; Josephus, "B. J." ii. 1, § 3), appointed for the fifteenth day."

(Exodus 12:29,33)

Moses and Aaron did NOT go out during the night – that is an incorrect assumption that many have:

²⁸ Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!"

²⁹ So Moses said, "You have spoken well. I will never see your face again." (Exodus 10:28-29)

After the death of the firstborn, Israelites had a number of tasks to complete before leaving Egypt. They were to stay inside their houses until morning, the breaking of daylight, burn the remains of the lambs that had not been eaten, go to the villages and cities where the Egyptians lived and ask them to give them silver, gold, and clothing, gather and load up whatever possessions they were to carry and with their herds and flocks travel on foot, for some as much as twenty miles, to Rameses where their organized journey out of Egypt was to begin. Notice:

³⁴ And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. ³⁵ And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: ³⁶ And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians. ³⁷ And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. ³⁸ And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. ³⁹ 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 12:34-39, KJV)

The night to be observed is the night that they left Rameses. The night they actually left Egypt.

After doing what God told them to do, they left.

Exodus 13:18 tells us, “the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.” Considering the number of people and the age range, it is remarkable that they were able to accomplish this all by the night after the Passover.

Unleavened Bread

We Christians recognize that Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on Passover and that we are to try to live, as He did, without sin and hypocrisy, of which leaven symbolically can represent (Luke 12:1).

The late Herbert W. Armstrong wrote about this:

And, as the Israelites went out with a high hand (Numbers 33:3), in great exultation and elation over their deliverance from bondage, so does the newly begotten Christian start out his Christian life — up in the clouds of happiness and joy. But what happens?

The devil and sin immediately pursue after the newly begotten son of God — and soon the new and inexperienced Christian finds he is down in the depths of discouragement, and tempted to give up and quit.

Notice Exodus 14, beginning verse 10 — as soon as the Israelites saw this great army pursuing them, they lost their courage. Fear came over them. They began to grumble and complain. They saw it was impossible for them to get away from Pharaoh and his army, because he was too powerful for them. And they were helpless. So it is with us.

Our Strength Not Sufficient!

But notice the message of God to them through Moses: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord ...

for the Egyptians ... ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you"! How wonderful!

Helpless, we are told to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. He shall fight for us. We cannot conquer Satan and sin, but He can. It is the risen Christ — our High Priest — who will cleanse us — sanctify us — deliver us — who said He would never leave us nor forsake us!

We cannot keep the Commandments in our own power and strength. But Christ IN US can keep them! We must rely on Him in faith. (Armstrong HW. God's Holy Days-or Pagan Holidays-Which? Worldwide Church of God, 1976)

Purpose of Festival

But let us learn the full significance of this. WHY did God ordain these feast days? What was His great PURPOSE? Turn now to Exodus 13, verse 3: "...Moses said unto the people, Remember THIS DAY, in which ye CAME OUT from Egypt..." This was the 15th of Abib. Verse 6: "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and the seventh day shall be a FEAST unto the Eternal... This is done BECAUSE of that which the Eternal did [a MEMORIAL]... and it shall be for a SIGN" — (miraculous PROOF of identity) — "unto thee upon thine hand, and for a MEMORIAL between thine eyes" — WHY? — "that the LORD'S LAW MAY BE IN THY MOUTH... Thou shalt therefore KEEP this ordinance..."

Oh, beloved brethren, do you see the wonderful meaning? Do you grasp the true significance of it all? Do you see God's PURPOSE? The PASSOVER pictures the DEATH OF CHRIST for the remission of sins that are past. The accepting of His BLOOD does not forgive sins we SHALL commit — it does not give LICENSE to continue in sin — therefore WHEN we accept it, our sins are forgiven only up to that time — PAST SINS.

But shall we stop there? Past sins forgiven. But we are still flesh beings. We still shall suffer temptations. Sin has held us in its clutch — we have been SLAVES to sin, in its power. And we are powerless to deliver ourselves from it! We have been in BONDAGE to sin. Let us understand the picture — the meaning.²⁸

To what degree should Christians put away sin? Completely, as Jesus taught, “you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Leaven symbolically can be a type of sin (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Like sin, leaven puffs up.

As seven is God's number symbolizing completeness, Christians are to follow the Passover with seven days of unleavened bread. The meaning and the symbolism is not complete with just Passover. Passover pictures the acceptance of Christ's blood for the remission of past sins and the death of Jesus.

Should we leave Christ symbolically hanging on the tree of His death (cf. Galatians 3:13)? No. The seven days of unleavened bread following Passover help picture to us the complete putting away of sin, the keeping of the Commandments — after past sins are forgiven as the result of Jesus' sacrifice.

The Days of Unleavened bread picture the life and work of the risen Jesus. Jesus ascended to the throne of God where He is now actively at work in our behalf as our High Priest, cleansing us of sin (Hebrews 2:17-18) delivering us completely from its power!

Here is some of what the Hebrew scriptures say about the Days of Unleavened Bread:

¹⁵ Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day,

28 Armstrong HW. What You Should Know About the Passover and Festival of Unleavened Bread. Good News, March 1979

that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat — that only may be prepared by you. ¹⁷ So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. ¹⁸ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹ For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. ²⁰ You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'" (Exodus 12:15-20)

Leviticus 23:6-8 teaches about it as well. And Deuteronomy 16:16 shows that offerings were expected to be given on the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Fall Holy Days.

Originally, there were no "burnt offerings or sacrifices" when God "brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 7:22). They were added because of disobedience (Jeremiah 7:21-27) and the New Testament is clear that we do not need to have burnt offerings or animal sacrifices now (Hebrews 9:11-15).

As we eat unleavened bread each of the days, we realize that we have to strive to avoid sin that is so prevalent in the world around us.

As far as the sequence of events, Passover was after sunset on the 14th of Nisan/Abib (Exodus 12:6) and the death angel passed-over at midnight (Exodus 12:23-29). During the early daylight hours on the 14th of Nisan/Abib, the children of Israel received gold and precious things from the Egyptians (Exodus 12:35-36). They left Egypt at night of the 15th of Nisan/Abib (Exodus 12:42; Deuteronomy 16:1).

Later, apparently on the 18th of Nisan/Abib, Pharaoh decided to pursue them (Exodus 14:5). On the 20th of Nisan/Abib, Pharaoh's armies get near the children of Israel (Exodus 14:9).

The Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread

On the 21st of Nisan/Abib, God had the Red Sea parted (Exodus 14:20-21). God called for the children of Israel to cross on dry land under the cloud (Exodus 14:20-22,29), where they were symbolically baptized (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). They endured their fleeing with their enemies behind them and the waters stopped on both sides of them. During the daylight hours of the 21st, the Egyptian army pursued them and was destroyed (Exodus 14:23-28).

Understand that it was on the Seventh Day of Unleavened bread that the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea and the army of Egypt was destroyed. The Seventh, the last, Day of Unleavened Bread pictures fully leaving the dead works of sin behind.

A Christian sequence of events starts from our acceptance of Jesus, repentance, and baptism (Acts 2:38-39). Christians endure to the end (Matthew 10:22) attaining to the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6) to be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

The crossing of the Red Sea may have other lessons for Philadelphian Christians. As they flee to a place in the wilderness just prior to the start of the Great Tribulation, Satan will be angry with them (Revelation 12:13-16). During the time the Philadelphian Christians are being protected (Revelation 3:7-13), bad things will be happening in the world around them (Revelation 12:14-17). They will often need to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Furthermore, the New Testament also seemingly shows a fulfillment of the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the destruction of the world's armies who will fight against the returning Jesus (Revelation 19:19-21).

The Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread helps picture the end of the world's systems and the emergence of the Kingdom of God.

Done Away or Kept?

Were the Days of Unleavened Bread done away? Consider something else that Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

Not Abolished With Old Covenant

Observe that the Days of Unleavened Bread are a PERIOD, having two high-day SABBATHS. And this PERIOD is established FOREVER — while the Israelites were still in Egypt — before the ceremonial law of Moses had been given or written — before God even proposed the old covenant! What the law of Moses, or the old covenant, did not bring or institute, THEY CANNOT TAKE AWAY! In Fenton's translation, the 17th verse is translated: "consequently KEEP THIS PERIOD AS AN EVER-LASTING INSTITUTION." The whole period is included.

This ALONE ought to prove that the HOLY DAYS — and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread — are binding today, and FOREVER! Now, if these texts apply to the 15th, not the 14th, as they assuredly do, and is here conclusively proved, then is the Passover established FOR-EVER? Indeed it is! But THESE texts above refer to the FEAST and not the PASSOVER. In the paragraph beginning Exodus 12:21 the PASSOVER is again referred to, and verse 24 establishes it FOREVER! ...

To observe Passover alone, and then fail to observe the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, means, in the symbolism, to accept Christ's blood, and to continue on in sin — to say ... the LAW is done away, we are under grace, meaning license, to continue in sin! The seven Days of Unleavened Bread picture the keeping of the Commandments, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin.²⁹

29 Ibid

Early Christians did not believe that the Days of Unleavened Bread were done away. The Apostle Paul endorsed properly keeping the Feast with unleavened bread (1 Corinthians 5:7). He and others still marked/observed it and observed it outside of Judea:

⁶ 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. (Acts 20:6)

If Christians were not keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Holy Spirit would not have inspired this to be recorded like this. Now Philippi was a Gentile town in Macedonia. It was ruled by the Romans--thus keeping these days was NOT limited to a place like Jerusalem. In at least two places in the New Testament, we see that the Days of Unleavened Bread were to be kept in Gentile areas (1 Corinthians 5:7; Acts 20:6).

Consider also the statement "it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread" in Acts 12:3. Since the Gentile author Luke addressed the Book of Acts to another Gentile (Acts 1:1), why would he have mentioned these days if they were unknown to the Gentile Christians and had ceased to exist?

Perhaps it should be added that the spurious 3rd century *Epistula Apostolorum* claims Jesus taught His followers should keep the Days of Unleavened Bread until He returns.³⁰ While we cannot rely on that document, it does indicate that some were keeping those days into the 3rd century.

Information from outside the Bible reports that the Apostles Paul, John, and Philip, along with Polycarp of Smyrna and other early Christians, kept the Days of Unleavened bread.³¹

30 The *Epistula Apostolorum* from Montague Rhode James in *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1924), pp. 485-503

31 Pionius. *Life of Polycarp*, Chapter 2. *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp. 488-506; Gorham ES. *History of the church to A.D. 325*. 1905, pp. 129-130; Eusebius. *The History of the Church*, Book V, Chapter XXIV, Verses 2-7. Digireads.com Publishing, Stilwell (KS), 2005, p. 114; THE PASCHAL CANON OF ANATOLIUS OF ALEXANDRIA. Chapters V,X, p. 415, 419

Despite this, Canon 38 of the *Council of Laodicea* of the fourth century (c. 363-364) prohibited the observation of the Days of Unleavened bread.³² Those in the Church of God could not comply with many decrees of this Council which went against the Bible and the early traditions of the faithful.

Therefore, various Sabbath-keepers continued to keep the Days of Unleavened bread afterwards³³ and into the Middle Ages and beyond.³⁴

As we in the *Continuing* Church of God do not accept that the *Council of Laodicea* spoke for the true Christian church, we still keep the Days of Unleavened Bread. We eat some unleavened bread for each of the seven days as the Bible admonishes (Exodus 12:15; 13:6; 23:15; 34:18). This bread can be made of different grains/nuts—the use of wheat is not biblically-required.

(It perhaps should be mentioned that one can eat foods other than only unleavened bread during this Feast, it is just that no leavened breads are to be eaten. Also, unlike Passover, the first and last Day of Unleavened Bread are days, like the weekly Sabbath, that one is not to work.)

While some like to allegorize away many portions of the Bible, although there certainly is a spiritual understanding to the Holy Days, there is also a physical one. And the physical observance helps us to better understand the spiritual lessons.

The Days of Unleavened Bread help picture that we Christians are to strive to put sin and hypocrisy out of our lives (cf. Matthew 16:6-12;

32 Synod of Laodicea. Translated by Henry Percival. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 14. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1900

33 Pritz. *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*. Magnas, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 35; Jerome as cited in Pritz, pp. 58,62,63; Ephiphanius. *The Panarion of Ephiphanius of Salamis: Book II (sects 1-46)* Section 1, Chapter 19, 7-9. Frank Williams, editor. Publisher BRILL, 1987, p. 117-119

34 Liechty D. *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century*. Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs (MI), 1993, pp. 61-62; Falconer John. *A Breife Refutation of John Traskes Judaical and Novel Fantyses*, pp. 57-58, as cited in Ball B. *Seventh Day Men: Sabbatarianism and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600-1800*, 2nd edition. James Clark & Co., 2009, pp. 49-50

23:28; Luke 12:1). By keeping them physically, it helps us to better learn the spiritual lessons that God intended.

4. Pentecost: The Truth About Your Calling and the Incredible Gift of God

Most who profess Christ know something about Pentecost. Many properly consider it the start of the New Testament church.

After Jesus died, His disciples were told to wait to receive the power of the Holy Spirit:

⁴ And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)

So they waited and:

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1).

Notice that statement emphasizes that fact that **the Day of Pentecost had fully come**. The Bible is making it clear that the events that follow were directly related to the fact that **the Day of Pentecost had fully come**. And, it happened to the disciples because they were all observing it together.

Here is what happened then:

² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ...

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of

sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. ⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ...⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:2-4, 38-42, 47).

They received some of the power of Holy Spirit. And this is considered to be the start of the Christian church by the Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, most Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Church of God groups. So the Holy Spirit was given at a certain time (the same time that many of the Jews observed Pentecost) and that Jesus' disciples were still observing it.

That was not a coincidence.

Is There More to Pentecost?

Many do not realize that Pentecost represented more than the giving of the Holy Spirit and the start of the New Testament church.

Looking at passages in Old and New Testaments provides more information about this day and its meaning.

The Feast of Pentecost was kept by Christians after the initial one, but with no mention of speaking in tongues. The Apostle Paul continued to keep Pentecost decades after the Pentecost mentioned in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Notice what he wrote, about 56 A.D.:

⁸ For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits. But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8).

This shows that Paul knew when Pentecost was, that he felt that the Corinthians must know when Pentecost was, and that the Ephesians would have known when Pentecost was. Thus, it apparently was being observed by Paul and the Gentiles in Ephesus and Corinth.

In another year, the Apostle Paul also wished to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, around 60 A.D.:

¹⁶ 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 (Acts 20:16).

Thus, Christians in Jerusalem were still observing Pentecost and Paul was observing it too. Otherwise, there would be no obvious reason why Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

The term Pentecost is a Greek term meaning 50th. That term is derived from the following Hebrew description of calculating the date:

¹⁵ And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath (Leviticus 23:15-16).

The Day of Pentecost has several names, and because of that, some have been confused about it. Its other biblical names include: the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Weeks and the day of firstfruits.

Jewish Traditions and When is Pentecost?

Singing often accompanied the holy festivals of God, which started at sunset:

²⁹ You shall have a song As in the night when a holy festival is kept, And gladness of heart as when one goes with a flute, To come into the mountain of the Lord, To the Mighty One of Israel. (Isaiah 30:29)

Modern Jews tend to call Pentecost by the term *Shavuot*.

Some have been confused when Pentecost is. Many Jews do not keep it on the same day that the *Continuing* Church of God keeps it.

The Jewish Sadducees correctly said "that Pentecost would always fall on Sunday," however "[i]n post-Talmudic and geonic literature ... Pentecost falls on the 6th of Siwan."³⁵ The date many Jews now use (which is in post-Talmudic literature which was put together after the Old Testament and is not scripture), is a later change and not the biblical date. We in the *Continuing* Church of God observe the biblical method.

Notice also the following from former Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks:

The Pharisees, who believed in the Oral Law as well as the Written one understood "the Sabbath" to mean, here, the first day of Pesach (15 Nisan). The Sadducees, who believed in the Written Law only, took the text literally. The day after the Sabbath is Sunday. Thus the count always begins on a Sunday, and Shavuot, fifty days later, also always falls on a Sunday.³⁶

Christians should remember that Jesus condemned the Pharisees for relying too much on the oral law over the written law (Mark 7:5-13). Jesus told them they were "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do" (Mark 7:13).

And, as shown below, Pentecost refers to the time of counting fifty as being associated with firstfruits:

¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. ¹⁷ You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked

35 Pineles, "Darkeh shel Torah," p. 212, Vienna, 1861; Pentecost. Jewish Encyclopedia of 1906

36 Sacks L. Judaism: A Thought for Shavuot. Arutz Sheva, June 3, 2014.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/15107#.U5M8P5tOVMw> viewed 06/07/14

with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD (Leviticus 23:16-17).

When you count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath, you find that Pentecost is always to come on a Sunday. Pentecost runs from sunset Saturday until sunset Sunday. Irenaeus, who claimed to have met Polycarp of Smyrna wrote that the apostles kept Pentecost on a Sunday.³⁷

Firstfruits

The use of the term “firstfruits” suggests a second harvest. And actually, this too is pointed out in the Old Testament:

¹⁶ ...the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; ¹⁷ and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field (Exodus 23:16-17).

²² And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end (Exodus 34:22).

²⁶ Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation (Numbers 28:26).

While some Protestant commentators refer to the wave sheaf offering as the feast of firstfruits,³⁸ this is a misnomer. While “a sheaf of firstfruits” was offered then (Leviticus 23:10-11), as shown above, the Bible refers to the Feast of Weeks as the time of firstfruits (not simply one sheaf).

How does the idea of firstfruits help us understand this day?

The Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Firstfruits (Exodus 34:22) reminds us that God is now calling only a small “firstfruits” spiritual harvest,

37 Comments related to Irenaeus. Fragments of Irenaeus, 7

38 e.g. Radmacher E.D. ed. The Nelson Study Bible. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1997, p. 213

with the Last Great Day coming which pictures a greater harvest later. The Spring harvest, in most areas, is much smaller than the greater Fall harvest, and this is consistent with God's plan of salvation for humanity.

But what about Jesus? Wasn't He a type of firstfruits?

Yes, He certainly was. Paul notes:

²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Christ is the fulfillment of the wave sheaf offering in Leviticus 23:10-11. He is the sheaf of firstfruits. He also fulfilled that role when He ascended into heaven on the Sunday (the wave sheaf offering was on a Sunday) after He was resurrected (John 20:1,17). But neither He nor His true followers observed what is now called Easter.

Also, James notes that Jesus brought us forth to also be a type of firstfruit:

¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (James 1:18).

So while Jesus was the original firstfruit to represent the wave sheaf offering, true Christians are a kind of firstfruits, represented by the Day of Pentecost. "Firstfruits" mean that only a few will be part of the harvest in this age (cf. Luke 12:32; Romans 9:27; 11:5)--but they also imply that there will be a greater harvest--a time where all who never had an opportunity for salvation will later have a true and real opportunity.

Notice what Peter stated on Pentecost:

²⁹ "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. (Acts 2:29-33)

Notice that Peter, on Pentecost, referred to Jesus as fruit and that He was raised. Pentecost shows that God blesses this small harvest by granting His Holy Spirit so that we can overcome, do His work and grow spiritually even though living in "this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4)

Now Jesus was not only the first of the firstfruits, He was also the firstborn among many brethren:

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

⁵ Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead (Revelation 1:5).

Since Jesus is the firstborn, this certainly implies that there will become others who are to be like Him. Thus, becoming like Jesus Christ is also part of the message of Pentecost. Of course the idea of becoming like Christ is taught throughout the Bible and is not limited to Pentecost. Notice what John wrote:

² ...we shall be like Him (1 John 3:2).

Because it is a holy convocation, it is observed similar to a weekly Sabbath, but with offerings (Deuteronomy 16:16). In the Old

Testament, the Feast of Weeks, involving firstfruits, was kept 50 days after the Sabbath after Passover.

After the death of Christ, the apostles gathered together on that date. And on that date, the Holy Spirit was poured out to provide Christians access to God as a kind of firstfruits. Jesus was the first of these firstfruits and Christians who are called in this age are also to be firstfruits as He is (those called later are also to be as Jesus is, but simply will not be firstfruits).

Can Holy Days Be Kept Outside of Jerusalem?

Some have indicated that the biblical Holy Days cannot be kept now as they would require that everyone would go to Jerusalem.

But that was not the case historically, even with Jesus.

Towards the start of His ministry while in Nazareth, Jesus spoke on the “day of the sabbaths” (Luke 4:16). Pentecost is also called the Feast of Weeks/Sabbaths (Deuteronomy 16:10,16). That Luke meant the plural can be confirmed by looking at the actual Greek term. The actual word (not the *Strong's* grouping of like words) for sabbaths, σαββάτων, is plural (σαββάτω, as in Luke 14:1, is singular). The passage is literally translated as follows:

¹⁶ And He came into Nazareth where He was brought up. And according to His custom, He went in on the days of the sabbaths, into the synagogue, and stood up to read. (Luke 4:16, Green³⁹)

So, this helps show that one could keep a Holy Day, as Jesus did, in a location other than Jerusalem. He also seemed to possibly keep another holy day in Galilee in Luke 6:1-2.⁴⁰

Perhaps it should be mentioned that when the Samaritan woman indicated that worship should possibly be restricted to the Jerusalem

39 Green JP, Sr. Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, third edition. Baker Books, 2002 printing, p. 187

40 see Green, p. 194; Gill's commentary point to date this as Pentecost; whereas Benson's and Barnes' commentaries points to this as the first day of unleavened bread.

area (John 4:19), Jesus said that there was not a Jerusalem worship restriction:

²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:21-24)

The New Testament clearly shows that Holy Day or other worship is not restricted to Jerusalem (see also Matthew 10:23).

It should be noted that the Greco-Roman churches also recognize that Pentecost, sometimes referred to as the feast of weeks (Leviticus 23:15-16) or the day of firstfruits (Number 28:26) in the Old Testament, had Christian significance. And they do not restrict its observance to one city.

Consider also that the idea of Christians being firstfruits is confirmed in the New Testament (James 1:18). In ancient Israel, there was a smaller harvest in the Spring and a larger harvest in the Fall. The Spring Holy Day Pentecost, when properly understood, helps picture that God is only calling some now for salvation (John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 1:26; Romans 11:15) with a larger harvest coming later (John 7:37-38).

Many Greco-Roman churches observe some version of Pentecost. Yet, partially because they do not observe certain other biblical holy days, they fail to understand why God is only calling some now, and that He does have a plan to offer all salvation (Luke 3:6; Isaiah 52:10). "Mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13).

5. Feast of Trumpets: Christ's Return and the Events Leading to it

Most of the Greco-Roman churches do not keep the biblical holy days that generally occur in the Fall. Yet, these Holy Days portray many pivotal events in God's plan.

The Feast of Trumpets not only pictures the coming of Christ to resurrect the firstfruits from the dead, it also pictures the terrible time of devastation just ahead and the intervention of Jesus Christ to save the living from total annihilation and to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Let's understand how this festival fits into God's great master plan.

Consider that there is a major time gap between the Day of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. Since the New Testament church began on Pentecost and basically ends when Jesus returns at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51-57), in a sense the period of time between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets can be considered as representing the church age.

The fourth Holy Day, the Feast of Trumpets, is observed in "the seventh month, on the first *day* of the month" (Leviticus 23:23-25).

The number seven in God's plan signifies completion and perfection. The seventh month of God's calendar (occurs in September and/or October) contains the final four festivals, picturing the completion of God's great master plan for us. The festival that falls on the first day of this month marks the beginning of the final events in God's plan.

It is another annual Sabbath of rest from one's regular work, and it was to be a memorial of blowing of trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25). It is also a time to learn God's ways (Nehemiah 8:2-3; cf. Ezra 3:1-7). Much of what happened to the children of Israel was written for our "examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

It is from the blowing of trumpets that the Feast of Trumpets draws its name.

There is a great deal of symbolic meaning tied in with the blowing of these trumpets, especially with regard to the end times in which we're living. It should be noted that the modern Jewish name for this date, Rosh Hashanah, is not biblical nor even original for the Jews. It was something that they adopted centuries after God gave it to them and after the Old Testament was written.⁴¹

The Bible teaches that Trumpets were blown to announce God's feasts, as well as to call people to assemble (Numbers 10:1-3, 10).

Book of Life

Interestingly, Jewish scholars have tied the Feast of Trumpets in with the 'Book of Life.'⁴² Why is that of interest?

Well, the Bible teaches that those who are listed in the 'Book of Life' (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5) will be resurrected (Hebrews 12:22-23). When? At the seventh and last trumpet:

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

The Book of Revelation clearly teaches that seven trumpets will be blown (8:2), punishment comes upon those who are not protected by God (9:4), and then God's kingdom and judgment will come (11:15-18). Finally it teaches that those whose names are not written in the Book of Life will experience the second death (Revelation 20:14-15).

41 Kramer, Amy J. Rosh Hashana Origins. Copyright © 1998-1999 Everything Jewish, Inc. http://www.everythingjewish.com/RoshH/RH_origins.htm 9/16/04

42 Peltz M, Rabbi. What is in a Rosh Hashanah greeting? Haaretz, September 17, 2012. <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/rabbis-round-table/what-is-in-a-rosh-hashanah-greeting-1.465357> viewed 09/10/14

Trumpet Blasts

Consider that the Bible shows that during Israel's history, which was heavily punctuated with conflicts and rebellion, trumpets continued to be used as warning devices, to call to arms or as preludes to important messages — always to mark an event of tremendous import to the whole nation.

God also used the prophets, among them Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea and Joel, to warn Israel about punishments He would bring upon them for their constant rebellion against His laws. These prophets were to use their voices like trumpets to blare their warnings to God's people.

¹ Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. (Isaiah 58:1)

We in the *Continuing* Church of God are working to do that today. We boldly tell of the sins of society and how world events are aligning with properly understood prophecy--which we also strive to explain.

But there will also be literal trumpet blasts coming in the future as the Book of Revelation teaches (Revelation 8:1-13, 9:1-18). But most will not heed those warnings.

Many are blown in the Book of Revelation, and a lot were to be blown on the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24)--hopefully many can see the connection.

But the most important trumpet, in a sense, could be the last, the seventh one. Here is what Revelation teaches about that:

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" ¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷ saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God

Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. ¹⁸ The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth." ¹⁹ Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. (Revelation 11:15-19)

The Feast of Trumpets pictures the future blowing of trumpets and the reality that Jesus will come and establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. The good news of coming Kingdom of God is a big part of what Jesus wants His servants to proclaim now (Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20), and then the end will come (Matthew 24:14). The Feast of Trumpets points to Christ's victory over this world.

Greco-Roman historians, such as Jerome and Epiphanius,⁴³ recorded that the 'Nazarene Christians' continued to keep the Fall Holy Days into the fourth and fifth centuries. They were also kept by the faithful Christians in Jerusalem who claimed the original Christian building in Jerusalem into the fourth century until they were stopped by Imperial authorities.⁴⁴

The anti-Semite John Chrysostom specifically attempted to stop people from keeping the Feast of Trumpets in the late fourth century.⁴⁵ However, those trying to be faithful continued to do so throughout history. The *Continuing Church of God* does so now.

43 *Catholica Omnia Tabulinum De Ecclesiae Patribus Doctoribusque Materia Migne JP Argumentum Patrologia Latina Volumen MPL025 Ab Columna ad Culumnam 1415 - 1542A*, pp. 922, 930 and Epiphanius (Ephiphanius. The Panarion of Ephiphanius of Salamis: Book II (sects 1-46) Section 1, Chapter 19, 7-9. Frank Williams, editor. Publisher BRILL, 1987, p. 117-119

44 Pixner B. Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion. *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1990: 16-35,60

45 John Chrysostom. Homily I Against the Jews I:5;VI:5;VII:2. Preached at Antioch, Syria in the Fall of 387 AD. *Medieval Sourcebook: Saint John Chrysostom (c.347-407): Eight Homilies Against the Jews*. Fordham University.

6. Day of Atonement: Satan Gets Banished

The next Fall holy day is the Day of Atonement:

²⁶ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁷ "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. ²⁸ And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God. ²⁹ For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. ³⁰ And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. ³¹ You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. ³² It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath." (Leviticus 23:26-32).

⁷ 'On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work. (Numbers 29:7)

Fasting is historically mainly how the phrase "afflict your souls" has been interpreted by the Jewish and Church of God communities (this is also verified by such passages as Psalm 35:13; 69:10 and Isaiah 58:5) to mean fasting, unless one is somehow ill, and thus is already afflicted. Evening to evening means from sunset to sunset.

The New Testament itself calls the Day of Atonement, "the Fast" (Acts 27:9), which not only indicates that the Apostle Paul was keeping it (which he would be per statements in Acts 21:18-24; 28:17), but that Greek-named Theophilus (the Christian which the Book of Acts was addressed to in Acts 1:1), also must have been or another term would have been substituted.

Observant individuals affiliated with the Churches of God will fast from sunset this night until sunset the next night (if they are physically able--nursing mothers, small children, pregnant women, and various afflicted others are not expected to fast--this is consistent with Jewish practices in this area as well). In this fast we go without food or drink.

Oddly, one Protestant report claims that one reason Christians do not need to keep the Day of Atonement is because there is no Jewish temple today.⁴⁶

Yet, the biblical reality is that the children of Israel kept the Day of Atonement for centuries before there was a temple and the other reality is that the New Testament shows that Christians are now the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

Two Goats

In the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement included a ceremony where the Azazel goat was sent to the wilderness (Leviticus 16:1-10). Christians see this sending of the Azazel goat away as picturing the time during the millennium when Satan will be bound and sent away for a thousand years in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-4). This means that Satan will not be able to tempt and deceive during that time. The Azazel goat was not slain, nor is Satan pictured being slain.

Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, a goat is not sacrificed by Christians to observe this day (cf. Hebrews 10:1-10).

Yet, although Jesus was our Passover lamb sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7-8) and He was slain only once (Hebrews 9:28), we also see a time other than Passover where Jesus is ceremonially slain.

Why?

46 Cocherell BL. SHOULD THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST FAST ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT? rev.1 10/04/07. <http://biblesearch.org/observancebook5/b5w63.html> accessed 07/30/15

Many have speculated, but there could be clues along with the fact that this sacrifice happens before the release of the second goat.

The original Passover only resulted in the children of Israel being passed over for their sins. In this age, those who are true Christians claim the sacrifice of Jesus on His final earthly Passover for paying the penalty for our sins. But real Christians are a small minority of the population of the world (Luke 12:32; Romans 11:5).

Since the Bible calls Satan “the god of this age” who has “blinded” the world (2 Corinthians 4:4), most have been blinded and have not yet been covered by the sacrifice of Jesus. Yet this will happen for nearly all who will be called--either in this age or the age to come (Matthew 12:32). Showing the sacrifice, ceremonially after the church age ends, helps demonstrate that the sacrifice of Jesus was not just for those called in the church age, as God’s plan includes offering salvation to all, and not just today’s elect.

By showing the sacrifice prior to the other goat being released, this shows that Jesus was not taking away the sins of Satan.

Jesus took the penalty of all human beings. But it doesn't apply to humans until after God calls us and grants us repentance (John 6:44) and we come to be willing to repent and we come to believe. Not only in Jesus, but we believe the Son and we believe the Father, that is, we believe what They say. Also, we prove it by repenting, being baptized, being granted the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and actually trying to live as They would have us live (cf. 1 John 2:6).

Kept Throughout History

The Day of Atonement was kept in the 4th century according to John Chrysostom who preached against it.⁴⁷

This can also be seen in Canon 69/70 of the Syrian *Apostolic Canons* near this time which tried to ban it.⁴⁸

47 John Chrysostom. Homily I Against the Jews 1:5;VI:5;VII:2. Preached at Antioch, Syria in the Fall of 387 AD

A Muslim document, dated from the period of the fifth-tenth century, states that Jesus and His disciples kept the fast on the same days as the Jews. It indicates that Judeo-Christians were still keeping the Day of Atonement while the Greco-Romans came up with a 50 day Lenten-

fasting period that Jesus did not keep.⁴⁹ Reports from other historians support this view.⁵⁰ Furthermore, we see historical reports that it was still being kept in Transylvania in the 16th century.⁵¹

The old Radio Church of God observed the Day of Atonement (and the other Holy Days) throughout the 20th century. We in the *Continuing* Church of God continue to observe it today.

48 Seaver JE. Persecution of the Jews in the Roman Empire (300-438), Issue 30 of University of Kansas publications: Humanistic studies. University of Kansas Publications, 1952, pp. 34-35

49 Tomson P. Lambers-Petry L. The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature, Volume 158, 2003, pp. 70-72; Stern SM. Quotations from Apocryphal Gospels in 'Abd Al-Jabbar. Journal of Theological Studies, NS. Vol. XVIII, (1) April 1967: 34-57

50 e.g. Pines, pp. 32-34

51 Liechty, pp. 61-62

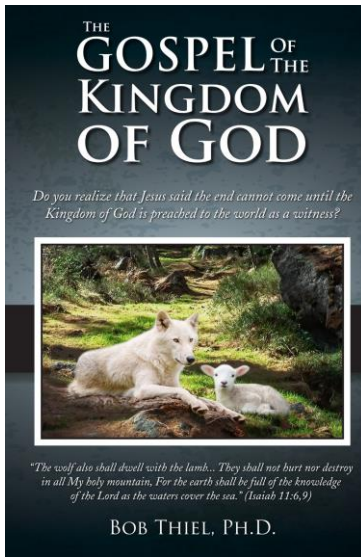
7. Feast of Tabernacles: A Glimpse of What the World Looks Like Under Christ's Reign

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures a culminating event in God's plan. After Jesus died for our sins to redeem humankind, and after He sent us the Holy Spirit and picked out a people for His Name to become kings and priests to reign with Him on earth (Revelation 5:10), and

after His Second Coming, and after He has finally placed all the sins upon the head of Satan separating both him and the sins from the presence of God and His people (making us finally joined at-one with Him, atonement), then we are ready for that final series of events, the commencement of the establishment of the millennial Kingdom of God on earth.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the spiritual and material abundance that will occur during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ when people will keep God's laws without Satan's deceptions (Revelation 20:1-6). This is in contrast to what is

***Do you know the truth
about the Gospel of the
Kingdom of God?***



We have a booklet that is freely available at www.cog.org that provides information about what Jesus, His early followers, and others understood about the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

happening now in a world deceived by Satan (Revelation 12:9). Satanic deception, which will be gone then (Revelation 20:1-3), is part of why most who profess Christianity have been misled by 'nice' false ministers as well as why many of those ministers have been misled (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Jesus himself, kept the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day, and also taught it per John 7:10-37.

Here are some instructions about it from the Hebrew scriptures:

³³ Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁴ "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. ³⁵ On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.

⁴¹ You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, (Leviticus 23:33-35,41-42)

¹³ "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, ...

¹⁴ And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

¹⁶ "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able,

according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you. (Deuteronomy 16:13-17)

God had ancient Israel dwell in booths/tabernacles ('sukkos' in Hebrew) in the wilderness for decades before they entered the promised land. Those booths, in a sense, pictured that they were only heirs to the promised land. Even during the Millennium, when the Kingdom of God is ruling over mortal nations, the mortal people will be only heirs to the Kingdom. They must overcome and grow in knowledge and wisdom to inherit the promises.

God says of Ephraim (sometimes portraying a type of all Israel in scripture) that they will "dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the feast" (Hosea 12:9, Douay-Rheims). Israel, in the wilderness, was a type of all people who must go through trials and tribulations to inherit the promises (1 Corinthians 10:11). They were sojourners, waiting to inherit the promises of God.

We Christians are to realize that we have no permanent city in this age and look to the one to come (Hebrews 13:14). The staying in temporary dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles helps remind us of that. Christians should attend church services, if possible, each day of the Feast of Tabernacles to learn (Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Nehemiah 8:17-18) being living sacrifices, which is our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time to **rejoice** (Deuteronomy 14:26; 16:15). The use of the related tithe (commonly called "second tithe") shows that this is to be a time of abundance (Deuteronomy 14: 22-26), but also that the ministry should be taken care of in this age (Deuteronomy 14:27). The Feast of Tabernacles helps picture the time of millennial abundance. This gives us a glimpse into the time after Jesus returns.

The millennium represents the seventh day of God's 7,000 year plan. Interestingly, every seven years, the book of the law was commanded to be read at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10-13). This helps picture that the law, including the Ten Commandments, will be kept in the millennium, as the Bible shows

the law will be taught then (Isaiah 2:2-3; more on the commandments can be found in our free online booklet *The Ten Commandments*). It is living according to God's laws that will bring blessings and abundance during the millennium.

We Christians now await the coming millennium and the change that occurs at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52), which is also called the first resurrection:

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4)

The Bible show that after Jesus gathers the Church to Himself, and after He is seated on His throne where we will be ruling with Him, He will gather the nations before Him and say to the Christians:

³⁴ Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Matthew 25:34).

Now, those who keep the Feast of Tabernacles look forward to this as it helps picture the millennial kingdom.

In the early second century, Papias of Hierapolis said:

[T]here will be a period of some thousand years after the resurrection of the dead, and that the kingdom of Christ will be set up in material form on this very earth.⁵²

The observance of the Feast of Tabernacles is a shadow of the coming millennial kingdom of God that faithful Christians have kept since New Testament times.

52 Eusebius. The History of the Church, Book 3, Chapter XXXIX; Digireads, p. 69

Where Can it Be Kept?

The Feast of Tabernacles is essentially a ‘pilgrimage’ (Psalm 84:1-5) period, meaning it usually involves travel outside of one’s normal community. Jesus ‘tabernacled’⁵³ with humans when He was here.

While some falsely claim that the Feast of Tabernacles from the past through current times must only be kept in Jerusalem, this is in error. The children of Israel were not even in Jerusalem for centuries after the commands for its observance in Leviticus 23 were recorded—hence Jerusalem was not an initial option for them. The Bible shows the Feast of Tabernacles can be kept in cities other than Jerusalem (Nehemiah 8:15; cf. Deuteronomy 14:23-24). During the second temple period (530 B.C – 70 A.D.), Jews often kept it elsewhere.⁵⁴

It may also be of interest to note Polycarp of Smyrna in the 2nd century⁵⁵ and certain others in Asia Minor in the late 4th century kept the Feast of Tabernacles in Asia Minor, not Jerusalem. This is

confirmed by sources such as the Catholic saint Jerome⁵⁶ and research done by the 20th century Cardinal Jean Danielou.⁵⁷

A nineteenth century anti-millennial scholar named Giovanni Battista Paganini wrote the following about the Egyptian Bishop Nepos of the third century and those who supported the millennium:

...all those who teach a millennium framed according to Jewish ideas, saying that during the millennium, Mosaic law will be restored...These are called Judaical Millenarians, not as being Jews, but as having invented and upheld a millennium according ... The principal authors of this error were Nepos, an African Bishop, against whom St. Dionysius

53 As the Greek word ἐσκήνωσεν in John 1:14 can be translated per Green JP. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Baker Books, 1996, 5th printing 2002, p. 282

54 Hayyim Schauss noted, “Sukkos was a great festival even outside of Jerusalem.” Schauss H. *The Jewish Festivals: A Guide to Their History and Observance*, 1938. Schocken, p. 184

55 *Life of Polycarp*, Chapter 19. *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp.488-506

56 *Catholica Omnia Tabulinum De Ecclesiae Patribus Doctoribusque Materia Migne JP Argumentum Patrologia Latina Volumen MPL025 Ab Columna ad Culumnam 1415 - 1542A*

57 Danielou, Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie. *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*. Translated by John A. Baker. The Westminster Press, 1964, pp. 343-346

wrote his two books on Promises; and Apollinaris, whom St. Epiphanius confound in his work against heresies.⁵⁸

It should be of interest to note that neither Bishops Nepos nor Apollinaris were Jews, but were condemned for having a religion that had “Jewish” beliefs. And since Apollinaris is called a Catholic saint, it should be clear that the respected non-Jewish Christian leaders in the early third century clearly did hold to ideas that were condemned by the allegorists. The fact that they held to “Mosaic law” is evidence then that they both understood the meaning of and kept the Feast of Tabernacles, but with a Christian emphasis.

The Greco-Roman bishop & saint Methodius of Olympus in the late 3rd or early 4th century taught that the Feast of Tabernacles was commanded and that it had lessons for Christians.⁵⁹

The Catholic priest and scholar Jerome said that Nazarene Christians kept it and that they believed that it pointed to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.⁶⁰ This keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles by Nazarene Christians in the late fourth century was also confirmed by the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox saint Epiphanius of Salamis.⁶¹

Christian Differences from the Israelites

58 Pagani, Giovanni Battista. Published by Charles Dolman, 1855. Original from Oxford University. Digitized Aug 15, 2006, pp. 252-253

59 Methodius wrote, “For since in six days God made the heaven and the earth, and finished the whole world, and rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, so by a figure in the seventh month, when the fruits of the earth have been gathered in, we are commanded to keep the feast to the Lord, ...it is commanded that the Feast of our Tabernacles shall be celebrated to the Lord ... For like as the Israelites, having left the borders of Egypt, first came to the Tabernacles, and from hence, having again set forth, came into the land of promise, so also do we. For I also, taking my journey, and going forth from the Egypt of this life, came first to the resurrection, which is the true Feast of the Tabernacles, and there having set up my tabernacle, adorned with the fruits of virtue, on the first day of the resurrection, which is the day of judgment, celebrate with Christ the millennium of rest, which is called the seventh day, even the true Sabbath.” Methodius. Banquet of the Ten Virgins (Discourse 9). Translated by William R. Clark. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6, 1886

60 *Catholica Omnia Tabulinum De Ecclesiae Patribus Doctoribusque Materia Migne JP Argumentum Patrologia Latina Volumen MPL025 Ab Columna ad Culumnam 1415 - 1542A*
61 Epiphanius, pp. 117-119

Mainly based upon New Testament scriptures, Christians keep the Feast of Tabernacles a bit different than the Israelites did.

Records indicate that the Feast of Tabernacles seems to have been kept in Europe during the Middle Ages⁶² as well as specifically in Transylvania in the 1500s,⁶³ at places without palm branches. There is some evidence to suggest that it was kept in the Americas in the 1600 and 1700s.⁶⁴ It was kept by the old Radio Church of God and Worldwide Church of God all around the world in the 20th century.

We in the *Continuing* Church of God continue to keep it in places around the world and we also teach that the Feast of Tabernacles points to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God.

The Feast of Tabernacles has been observed by many modern Christians in either tents or motel/hotel rooms functioning as “tabernacles”—temporary dwellings— and not just in palm-branch huts that the Israelites normally used. The New Testament shows that Christians have a different tabernacle (cf. Hebrews 8:2; 9:11-15), which is consistent with not having to personally to build a palm-booth. The Bible shows that the children of Israel dwelt mainly in tents per Exodus 33:8 (and sometimes other apparently temporary, per Deuteronomy 4:45-49, homes) while they were in the wilderness for forty years and that God considered those as “tabernacles” per Leviticus 23:43. Living in tents or motel rooms is a similar type of temporary dwelling/tabernacle today.

The Bible shows Christians need not make animal sacrifices/offerings (Hebrews 9:9) like the burnt offerings which the children of Israel used to provide during the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:36-37). Instead, we are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1)—which normally includes regularly attending church services during the Feast of Tabernacles.

62 Ambassador College Correspondence Course, Lesson 51. "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place ..." Rev. 12:6. 1968

63 Liechty, pp. 61-62

64 Ambassador College Correspondence Course, Lesson 53. I Will Build My Church, Part 5. 1969

Some may wonder why attending services is done for all the days at the Feast of Tabernacles, yet this is not required for the Days of Unleavened Bread. The basic scriptural reason is that the command says, "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days ... Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses" (Deuteronomy 16:13,15), but that is not so stated related to the Days of Unleavened Bread—the commands for it says to eat unleavened bread for seven days in Leviticus 23:6 and Deuteronomy 16:3, as opposed to observe the feast for seven days (we make a 'sacrifice' the seven days of unleavened bread by eating unleavened bread on each of the days). The Bible also says to be in temporary dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:42), but does not state this related to the other Holy Days.

Since Satan will be bound for the millennial reign (Revelation 20:1-2), there will be less deception then. Going away for the time of the Feast of Tabernacles and meeting daily helps picture a time when the world will be quite different than it now is.

"Your Kingdom Come!" (Matthew 6:10).

The Bible Teaches that the Feast of Tabernacles Will Be Kept in the Millennium and God Will Ultimately 'Tabernacle' with Us

Bible prophecy shows that the Feast of Tabernacles will be kept in the

millennium:

¹⁶ And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall

be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19).

So the Bible teaches that God will expect all to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the future. Even Catholic commentators recognize that God's plan includes the Feast of Tabernacles.⁶⁵

The kingdom of God will replace all the kingdoms of this world (Revelation 11:15), and this festival helps picture this by separating (cf. Revelation 18:4; 1 John 2:18-19) Christian pilgrims (1 Peter 2:1-12) from their usual routine.

The keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles gives us a glimpse in this age of what will happen in the future millennial kingdom. The Bible also shows that later, "the tabernacle of God" will be on the earth "and He will dwell with" us (Revelation 21:3).

Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles now is a foretaste of things to come in the Kingdom of God.

65 A Catholic commentary on passages in Zechariah 14 states: "In the mean time such as before persecuted the Church shall be converted, & with great devotion will celebrate the festivities, and exercise religious rites to Gods honor: and shall merit great rewards." The Original And True Douay Old Testament Of Anno Domini 1610 Volume 2 Prepared and Edited by Dr. William von Peters, Ph.D. Copyright © 2005, Dr. William G. von Peters. Ph.D. 2005 copyright assigned to VSC Corp, p. 824

8. Last Great Day: God's Amazing Plan of Salvation for Humankind

This eighth day, the day which immediately follows the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, pictures the completion of the plan of redemption.

The "Book of Life" — typifying salvation — will be opened (Revelation 20:12). This is just prior to the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1). The Jews call this festival *Shemini 'Azeret*, which means "eighth day of assembly" (also implying that the previous seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles were days of assembly).

The entire seven-day Feast of Tabernacles combined with its associated eighth day are referred to as the "Feast of Ingathering" in the Old Testament:

¹⁶ ... Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. (Exodus 23:16)

This 'ingathering' is a larger harvest than the firstfruits associated with the Feast of Weeks. It is a greater harvest.

Here is a reference to the eighth day Feast association in the Bible:

³⁴ ... 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. ... ³⁶ On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation. ... It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it. (Leviticus 23:34,36)

This day is often referred to in Church of God circles as the *Last Great Day*, because of what the New Testament states about it:

³⁷ On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has

said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37-38)

So Jesus kept this day that comes immediately after the festival picturing the millennium, and taught on it.

After the millennium, what happens?

A resurrection (Revelation 20:5).

The dead stand before God. This wouldn't include true Christians today, as they are resurrected when Jesus returns. Those in this resurrection must be those who died in ignorance of God's true plan

in past ages. This is that judgment day Jesus repeatedly mentioned:

⁷ And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ... ¹⁴ And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! (Matthew 10:7,14-15)

²³ And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you. (Matthew 11:23-24)

Notice that it is more tolerable in the day of judgment for those God destroyed in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24) than for those who knowingly rejected Christ and the message of His kingdom.

Jesus also taught that "ALL SINS WOULD BE FORGIVEN" (Mark 3:28), except the 'unpardonable sin' (Mark 3:29). It is with the fulfillment of the Last Great Day that all who have not had an opportunity for salvation will truly have that opportunity, and nearly all will accept that offer.

Nearly all humans who ever lived will be saved!

In the 2nd century, Polycarp of Smyrna reportedly taught about the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.⁶⁶

The biblical truth is that, because of God's love, Jesus came to DIE FOR ALL:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:16-17)

So, did the loving God send His Son to die for a relative few or the world?

Protestants, who often quote John 3:16, tend to teach that the world *could* be saved but that the vast majority who ever lived will suffer in torment forever. They also seem to overlook that Jesus came to die for all (John 3:17). Is that the type of plan of salvation that a God who is all-knowing and is love would come up with? Does the Bible support the idea that everyone can be saved now? If not, is that fair?

Since God is all knowing and all powerful and is love (1 John 4:8,16), would God have predestined most who ever lived to eternal torment?

No.

Certainly God is wise enough to have a plan that actually works.

Romans 9:14-15 states:

¹⁴ What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

⁶⁶ Pionius? Life of Polycarp, Chapter 19. Translated by J. B. Lightfoot, The Apostolic Fathers, vol. 3.2, 1889, pp.488-506

We know that God chose part of Israel in the Old Testament, and few others. How is that love if the rest are condemned to eternal torture?

God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). The reason that not all were called in this age was because He knew most would not respond and endure with the truth to the end to be saved (cf. Mark 13:13; Luke 8:5-15). But that does not mean that those not called now were all cut off and lost.

The Bible teaches that many have been intentionally blinded in this age (John 12:37-40; Isaiah 44:18). Those who were blinded in this age still have an opportunity (cf. John 9:41; Isaiah 42:16-18). Notice also:

14 I will again do a marvelous work among this people...²⁴
These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding,
And those who complained will learn doctrine. (Isaiah 29:14,24)

There is no partiality with God (Romans 2:11). There will be an opportunity for all as “all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God” (Isaiah 52:10).

Those not part of this first resurrection, called “the rest of the dead” (Revelation 20:5), are resurrected after the millennium is over. This is a physical resurrection and will involve those who feel that their hope has been cut off (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

Though they will be judged guilty of sin (Revelation 20:12; Romans 3:23; cf. 1 Peter 4:17), “Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13). God will plead with all flesh (Jeremiah 25:31; Isaiah 3:13) and many will respond (Isaiah 65:24). Although not all will accept His offer, and this is not a second chance (those who truly had a chance and fully rejected God’s Holy Spirit will not get that opportunity to be forgiven per Mark 3:29), many will repent. The Last Great Day helps show this.

Consider also the following:

¹⁹ O Lord, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You From the ends of the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things." ²⁰ Will a man make gods for himself, Which are not gods? ²¹ "Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; And they shall know that My name is the Lord. (Jeremiah 16:19-21)

¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, His carved image. He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" ¹⁸ They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, And their hearts, so that they cannot understand. ...²² I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, And like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you. (Isaiah 44:17,18,22)

Even those who accepted false traditions, including those that were idolaters (Isaiah 44:17-18), will have their first real opportunity for salvation (Isaiah 44:22). Billions throughout the ages in Africa, Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the islands never heard of Jesus and the true gospel of the kingdom—and God foreknew this and had a plan (Romans 11:2).

We in the *Continuing* Church of God agree that "Our God is the God of salvation" (Psalm 68:20) and teach that He has a plan of salvation that actually works for more than just a relative few.

There is only one name under heaven by which humans can be saved (Acts 4:12; cf. Isaiah 43:11) and that is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:10; John 3:18). Since most of humanity has never heard the truth about Jesus and the gospel of the Kingdom of God,⁶⁷ and "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:6), there will be an opportunity for all to attain salvation—either in this age or the age to come (cf. Matthew 12:31-32; Luke 13:29-30).

⁶⁷ For details, see our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom of God* at www.ccog.org

The future age to come arrives after the second resurrection (as the true Christians at the time are raised at the first resurrection per Revelation 20:5-6) and includes the time of the white throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-12). Isaiah (Isaiah 65:20), as well as the Roman and Orthodox Catholic saint Irenaeus,⁶⁸ indicated that this particular age to come would be about one hundred years long.

This idea was still held in the Middle Ages by those that the Church of Rome persecuted as reported by the inquisitor bishop Bernard Guidonis.⁶⁹

This doctrine was taught by the Radio/Worldwide Church of God in the 20th century and it still taught by the *Continuing* Church of God.

God's Plan of Salvation

Keeping the biblical holy days reminds true Christians of God's true plan of salvation. The *Continuing* Church of God understands how God's plan regarding this is laid out by the observance of His Feasts (Leviticus 23:37).

God clearly teaches that He does NOT want pagan practices used to worship Him:

29 When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, 30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' 31 You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. 32 Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (Deuteronomy 12:29-32)

68 Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book V, Chapter 34, Verses 2-3,4

69 BERNARD GUI: *INQUISITOR'S MANUAL*, Chapter 5. Translated by David Burr, History Department, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA

Those who combine pagan worship practices with biblical ones obscure God's plan of salvation and generally do not understand it.

The New Testament shows that the Apostle Paul observed biblical holy days (e.g. Acts 18:21; 20:6,16; 27:9; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, 16:8) as he kept the law and customs of his people.

Paul specifically condemned incorporating pagan practices with biblical observances (1 Corinthians 10:20-23). Paul himself stated near the end of his life that he kept all the practices Jews needed to keep (Acts 28:17-19; cf. Acts 21:18-24) and that would have had to include all the holy days listed in Leviticus 23.

As a rule, the Greco-Roman churches do not follow the Apostle Paul's admonition to imitate him as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1) nor the Apostle John's admonition to continue to walk as he and Jesus walked (1 John 2:6, 18-19), since they do not keep all the biblical holy days. Also, those churches normally combine heathen practices in their worship calendars, which the apostles opposed (1 Corinthians 10:20-23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Jude 3-4, 12; 1 John 2:6).

By not keeping God's Holy Days, but instead non-biblical substitutes, many do not realize that sin needs to be truly out of our lives, that God is only calling some now, that all will have an opportunity for salvation in this age or the age to come, and nearly all who ever lived will be saved in the later harvest.

God's Holy Days lay out parts of His plan of salvation that most do not understand. It is a marvelous and loving plan.

9. Mistranslations and the Sabbath

Why do most who profess Jesus not keep the biblical Holy Days? In addition to anti-Judaic sentiment, compromise, ignorance, and misplaced ideas about ‘tradition,’ mistranslations are a reason many do not seem willing to accept that they need to observe God’s festivals.

There are usually a couple of mistranslated/misunderstood passages that people tend to point to as supposed ‘proof’ that the biblical holy days are done away with.

Colossians 2:16-17

Probably, the most common portion of the Bible that is often cited as “proof” that the Sabbath and the biblical Holy Days are done away is Colossians 2:16-17. So, let’s examine one slight mistranslation of it:

¹⁶ 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: ¹⁷ Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17, KJV).

The above translation is close, however, it added a word “is” (which is why the KJV translators put *is* in *italics*) that is not in the original Greek.

A truly literal translation would leave it out as it is not in there. Notice the *Strong’s Concordance* numbers and related words for verse 17⁷⁰:

3739. 2076 4639... 3588... 3195....3588 1161 4983 9999 3588 5547
Which are a shadow of things to come; the.... but.... body of...
Christ.

It should be noted that 9999 means that there was no word in the biblical text—the word “is” is not in this scripture.

70 Interlinear Transliterated Bible. Copyright (c) 1994 by BibleSoft).

Because the same three *Strong's* words (#4983, 3588, & 5547) are used four other times in the New Testament and in those times the KJV translates them as "body of Christ" (Romans 7:4; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12)--as does the NKJV—so should have the KJV.

Therefore, if those translators were simply consistent with themselves, they would have translated Colossians 2:16-17 to state (and included parentheses or commas):

¹⁶ Therefore let no man judge YOU in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath ¹⁷ (for those things are a shadow of the things to come), but the body of Christ.

Or in other words, do not let those outside the 'body of Christ' (the church, Colossians 1:18) judge you regarding Holy Days, but only the true church itself. Colossians 2:16-17 is not saying that the Sabbath and Holy Days are done away.

Even the early Orthodox bishop Ambrose of Milan recognized that Colossians 2:17 was referring to the "body of Christ" as he wrote the following commenting on that verse:

Let us, then, seek the body of Christ...where the body of Christ is, there is the truth.⁷¹

It is sad that modern translators of the Greek have often ignored what the expression really meant.

It is poor exegesis (biblical interpretation) to rely on a mistranslation to claim that the holy days are done away with.

Galatians 4:8-10

Another common objection is to keeping the Holy Days is Galatians 4:8-10. Some Protestants tend to use this to say that no biblical

⁷¹ Ambrose of Milan. Book II. On the Belief in the Resurrection, section 107. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Socrates, Sozomenus: Church histories. Schaff P, Wace H, editors. Christian literature Company, 1896, p. 192

dates are to be observed. So let's look at what those scriptures actually teach:

⁸ But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years.

There are several problems with the anti-Holy Day argument here.

One is that the Galatians were Gentiles (although there were apparently some Jews addressed in later verses) and were NOT keeping the biblical Holy Days prior to conversion.

Plus, there is no way that the Bible would call biblical requirements as “beggarly elements.” Paul was clearly warning against pagan observances as the Galatians had “served those which by nature were not gods.”

Another is that Catholics/Protestants/Eastern Orthodox should consider that they often do observe various days and years (Sunday, Easter, Christmas, New Year’s), so they should not observe anything if they feel that no religious days are to be observed.

Galatians 4:8-10 is not doing away with the biblical Holy Days, but instead is a warning against clinging to non-biblical observances.

What about the seventh day Sabbath?

The seventh day Sabbath is first of the festivals of God listed in Leviticus 23. Even though it is a weekly, not annual Holy Day, some brief comments would seem to be in order.

The seventh day of the week, the biblical Sabbath, is now called Saturday. Although Sunday is shown on certain calendars as the seventh day of the week, the reality is that Sunday is the first day of the week. The New Testament clearly shows that Jesus (Luke 4:16,

21; 6:6; 13:10) as well as the Apostles and the faithful (Acts 13:13-15, 42-44; 17:1-4; 18:4; Hebrews 4:9-11) kept the seventh day Sabbath.

Many claim that the seventh day Sabbath is not enjoined in the New Testament, so it does not need to be kept today. But the only way to make that claim is to rely on mistranslations of the Bible. If one looks at what is believed to be the original Greek,⁷² original Aramaic,⁷³ and the original Latin Vulgate,⁷⁴ it is clear in all of those languages that the seventh day Sabbath is enjoined for Christians.

Even according to certain Catholic and Protestant translations of the Bible, the seventh day Sabbath rest was to remain for the obedient Christian people of God:

⁴ For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this manner, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works"; ⁵ and again, in the previously mentioned place, "They shall not enter into my rest." ⁶ Therefore, since it remains that some will enter into it, and those who formerly received the good news did not enter because of disobedience, ... ⁹ Therefore, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. ¹⁰ And whoever enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from his. ¹¹ Therefore, let us strive to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:4-6,9-11, NAB)

⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." ⁶ It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience...⁹ There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the

72 Green JP. The Interlinear Bible, 2nd edition. Hendrickson Publishers, 1986, p. 930

73 Roth AG, Daniel BB. Aramaic English New Testament, 5th edition. Netazari Press, 2012, pp. 404-405

74 Hebrews 4:9, Codex Amiatinus. <http://www.latinvulgate.com/lv/verse.aspx?t=1&b=19&c=4> accessed 10/22/15

people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their

example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:4-6,9-11, NIV)

The New Testament clearly states that Christians are to keep the seventh day Sabbath. In addition to allowing for spiritual growth and personal rejuvenation, the Sabbath also pictures a coming time of God's millennial rest.

While many do not consider that the seventh day Sabbath is a Holy Day, the Bible does (Leviticus 23:3; Exodus 20:8; Isaiah 58:13). The New Testament warns against not keeping it (Hebrews 4:4-11), yet many reason around with "empty words" (cf. Ephesians 5:26).

It should also be understood, although some have pointed to the Romans 14:5-6 to claim no specific days matter and that which days to observe are an individual choice, that view is in contradiction with many scriptures. Furthermore, the subject of Romans 14:5-6 dealt with which day(s) people, themselves, choose to fast throughout the year (this is not a command related to the Day of Atonement, cf. Matthew 9:15). The Apostle Paul's point in Romans 14 was that you should not try to impose your non-biblical preferences on others as doctrine.

It, perhaps, should also be mentioned that despite mistranslations hinting otherwise, the second century Bishop Ignatius of Antioch did NOT replace the seventh day Sabbath with Sunday.⁷⁵ Nor did the ancient document called the *Didache*.⁷⁶

For more documented information on the history of the church, check out the booklets *Where is the True Christian Church Today?* and the *Continuing History of the Church of God* at www.ccog.org.

⁷⁵ Thiel B. Ignatius and the Sabbath. *The Sabbath Sentinel*, Volume 69 (3): 18-21, 2016 and Thiel B. More on Ignatius and the Sabbath. *The Sabbath Sentinel*, Volume 70 (2): 15-17, 2017

⁷⁶ Thiel B. The *Didache* and the Sabbath. *The Sabbath Sentinel*, Volume 69 (2): 10, 19-20, 2016

10. Repackaged Demonic Holidays

What about Christmas, Easter, and other religious days that many professors of Christ observe?

Do they come from the Bible? If not, where do they come from? Does it matter, according to the Bible, if you keep them?

There are numerous holidays that the world's churches endorse, though not all of them are endorsed by all of them. Throughout history, some churches have sometimes endorsed, as well as sometimes condemned, those same holidays.

While it is beyond the scope of this booklet to go into all the details about each holiday and their origins, the reality is that many are repackaged demonic ones as they often originally were intended to honor a pagan god/goddess before various churches adopted and/or renamed them.

Many would be surprised to learn that Greco-Roman theologians have sometimes condemned these holidays as pagan and inappropriate for Christians—despite the fact that various Greco-Roman churches promote them in the 21st century.

New Year's Day Honored Janus (god of time) and Strenua (goddess of purification and well being)

The Bible begins the year in the Spring (Exodus 12:2), but what is commonly called New Year's Day is observed on January 1st on modern calendars. In the late 2nd century A.D., Greco-Roman theologian Tertullian condemned those who professed Christ who were celebrating a version of it. But, that did not stop many who wanted to celebrate.

The Catholic Encyclopedia reports:

Christian writers and councils condemned the heathen orgies and excesses connected with the festival ... celebrated at the beginning of the year: Tertullian blames Christians who regarded the customary presents — called strenuae (Fr.

étrennes) from the goddess Strenia, who presided over New Year's Day (cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 185-90) — as mere tokens of friendly intercourse (De Idol. xiv).⁷⁷

Around 487 A.D., the Greco-Romans seemed to adopt the “Feast of the Circumcision” on January 1st. This, however, did not stop all heathen activity.⁷⁸ So:

...towards the end of the sixth century the Council of Auxerre (can. I) forbade Christians *strenas diabolicas observare*.⁷⁹

The expression *strenas diabolicas observare* roughly translates from Latin to English as “observing the new time of the Devil.” It is likely that New Year’s resolutions are related to prayers and practices once given for the pagan goddess.

January 1st is not a biblical holiday, and even the Church of Rome has forbidden some of its attributes as demonic.

Valentine’s Day Honored Faunus/Pan (god of herds and fertility)

The Bible does not have a holiday like Valentine’s Day, but many people observe it.

Here is what a Catholic source has written about it:

The roots of St. Valentine's Day lie in the ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia, which was celebrated on Feb. 15. For 800 years the Romans had dedicated this day to the god Lupercus. On Lupercalia, a young man would draw the name of a young woman in a lottery and would then keep the

77 Tierney J. New Year's Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11, 1911

78 *The Catholic Encyclopedia* notes: “Even in our own day the secular features of the opening of the New Year interfere with the religious observance of the Circumcision, and tend to make a mere holiday of that which should have the sacred character of a Holy Day. St. Augustine points out the difference between the pagan and the Christian manner of celebrating the day: pagan feasting and excesses were to be expiated by Christian fasting and prayer (P. L., XXXVIII, 1024 sqq.; Serm. cxvii, cxviii).” Tierney J. Feast of the Circumcision. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III. Robert Appleton Company, 1908

79 Tierney J. New Year's Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11, 1911

woman as a sexual companion for the year...

*The Catholic Church no longer officially honors St. Valentine, but the holiday has both Roman and Catholic roots.*⁸⁰

A day of pagan roots and sexual license is certainly not a day for Christians to observe. This type of behavior was warned against in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 6:18; Jude 4).

Notice some Islamic comments about Valentine's Day:

Celebrating the Valentine Day is not permissible because: Firstly, it is an innovated holiday ...Christians were aware of the Pagan roots of Valentine's Day. **The way the Christians adopted St. Valentine's Day should be a lesson for Muslims ...We should avoid anything associated with pagan immoral practices** .. Love between families, friends and married people does not need to be celebrated on a day with such origins.⁸¹

Notice that Muslims associate Valentine's Day with Christianity (obviously the false compromising kind) and sin.

In other words, Valentine's Day causes the name of Christ (through the term 'Christianity') to be blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24; Isaiah 52:5). Do not have "the name of God blasphemed because of you" (Romans 2:24) keeping pagan holidays.

Real Christians do not keep repackaged demonic holidays (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:21).

Mardi Gras: Devil's Carnival

Carnivals like Mardi Gras and Valentine's Day (called Lupercalia below) came from paganism:

80 The Origins of St. Valentine's Day.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/ValentinesDay/>, January 31, 2004

81 Ruling on Celebrating Valentine's Day.

<http://www.contactpakistan.com/news/news144.htm>, January 31, 2004

One of the first recorded instances of an annual spring festival is the festival of Osiris in Egypt; it commemorated the renewal of life brought about by the yearly flooding of the Nile. In Athens, during the 6th cent. BC, a yearly celebration in honor of the god Dionysus was the first recorded instance of the use of a float. It was during the Roman Empire that carnivals reached an unparalleled peak of civil disorder and licentiousness. The major Roman carnivals were the Bacchanalia, the Saturnalia, and the Lupercalia. In Europe the tradition of spring fertility celebrations persisted well into Christian times ... Because carnivals are deeply rooted in pagan superstitions and the folklore of Europe, the Roman Catholic Church was unable to stamp them out and finally accepted many of them as part of church activity.⁸²

The Bacchanalia was to the god Bacchus, also called Dionysus. He was the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness, fertility, theatre, and religious ecstasy in Greek mythology. Sexual lewdness was part of the Bacchanalia celebration. His worship was condemned by the Greco-Roman leader Commodianus in the third century.⁸³

Alcohol, especially wine, played an important role in Greek culture with Dionysus being an important reason for a raucous life style.⁸⁴ Mardi Gras and Carnival seem to be related to this.

In the late second century, Roman Catholic Bishop and Eastern Orthodox saint Irenaeus condemned the followers of the heretic Valentinus for participating in meat eating heathen festivals.⁸⁵

82 Carnival. The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed. 2015

83 Commodianus. On Christian Discipline. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885

84 Gately I. Drink. Gotham Books, 2008, p. 11

85 Irenaeus wrote, "Wherefore also it comes to pass, that the "most perfect" among them addict themselves without fear to all those kinds of forbidden deeds of which the Scriptures assure us that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." For instance, they make no scruple about eating meats offered in sacrifice to idols, imagining that they can

Later, the Orthodox Catholic apologist Arnobius (died 330) warned against the type of fasts that pagans had ⁸⁶ and even seemed to warn about a 'Mardi Gras' banquet followed by a fast.⁸⁷

Thus, early writers condemned holidays that sound a lot like Carnaval/Mardi Gras because of its ties to pagan idolatry.

The Bible teaches:

¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:13-14)

While the Bible does not condemn rejoicing, Mardi Gras and related observances are contrary to scripture. In Bolivia they call it the "Devil's Carnival" and openly worship Satan as their god!⁸⁸

in this way contract no defilement. Then, again, at every heathen festival celebrated in honour of the idols, . . . Others of them yield themselves up to the lusts of the flesh with the utmost greediness, maintaining that carnal things should be allowed to the carnal nature, while spiritual things are provided for the spiritual. Some of them, moreover, are in the habit of defiling those women to whom they have taught the above doctrine, as has frequently been confessed by those women who have been led astray by certain of them, on their returning to the Church of God, and acknowledging this along with the rest of their errors" Irenaeus.

Against Heresies. Book 1, Chapter 6, Verse 3

86 Arnobius wrote, "What say you, O wise sons of Erectheus? what, you citizens of Minerva? The mind is eager to know with what words you will defend what it is so dangerous to maintain, or what arts you have by which to give safety to personages and causes wounded so mortally. This is no false mistrust, nor are you assailed with lying accusations: the infamy of your Eleusinia is declared both by their base beginnings and by the records of ancient literature, by the very signs, in fine, which you use when questioned in receiving the sacred things,—"I have fasted, and drunk the draught; I have taken out of the mystic cist, and put into the wicker-basket; I have received again, and transferred to the little chest."'" Arnobius. Against the Heathen, Book V, Chapter 26

87 Arnobius wrote, "The feast of Jupiter is tomorrow. Jupiter, I suppose, dines, and must be satiated with great banquets, and long filled with eager cravings for food by fasting, and hungry after the usual interval" Arnobius, Against the Heathen, Book VII, Chapter 32

88 Frommer's reported, "Devil's Carnival (La Diablada) Every spring, Oruro goes into carnival mode... One of the highlights are the devil dancers, the tradition of which derives from a peculiar kind of devil worship. Oruro is a mining town and the locals, spending so much time underground, decided to adopt a god of the underworld. Christian tradition dictates that this must be the devil and the Oruro faithful thus adopted Satan, or Supay, as their god"

http://events.frommers.com/sisp/index.htm?fx=event&event_id=5769;

<http://bayourenaissanceman.blogspot.com/2009/02/la-diablada.htm>

Carnaval/Mardis Gras is a demonic holiday and certainly not a Christian one. It was not kept by Jesus nor any of His early faithful followers.

Lent: A Perversion of the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost?

What about Lent?

Although the word 'Lent' means Spring season, it is now mainly observed in the Winter right after Mardi Gras.

The *World Book Encyclopedia* states:

Lent is a religious season observed in the spring...It begins on Ash Wednesday, 40 days before Easter, excluding Sundays, and ends on Easter Sunday.⁸⁹

What about Ash Wednesday?

Well, it is not an original Christian nor biblical Holy Day.

The Catholic Encyclopedia reports:

Ash Wednesday The name *dies cinerum* (day of ashes) which it bears in the Roman Missal is found in the earliest existing copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary and probably dates from at least the eighth century.

On this day all the faithful according to ancient custom are exhorted to approach the altar before the beginning of Mass, and there the priest, dipping his thumb into ashes previously blessed, marks the forehead.⁹⁰

So, the Church of Rome adopted it officially in the 8th century.

It should also be noted that the idea of placing a cross of ashes on the

89 Ramm B. Lent. *World Book Encyclopedia*, 50th ed., Volume 12. Chicago, p. 175

90 Thurston H. Ash Wednesday. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1907

forehead came from sun god worship⁹¹ and other forms of paganism.⁹²

Where Did the Forty-Day Lenten Fast Come From?

The Bible tells of a 50 day period to count, which is where we get the name Pentecost. Around the fourth-sixth centuries, the Greco-Romans were keeping some type of a 50 day fast that had resemblance to the Islamic fast of Ramadan.⁹³ In time, this changed to a forty-day abstinence of one or more (normally food) items.

Early Christians, of course, did not keep Lent as even the Catholic saint Abbot John Cassian in the fifth century realized:

Howbeit you should know that as long as the primitive church retained its perfection unbroken, this observance of Lent did not exist.⁹⁴

Thus, he admitted that Lent was added and that the original faithful did not keep it.

The Apostle Paul invoked keeping Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). Yet he did not do so for something called Lent. However, because the Days of Unleavened

91 P. Nabarz wrote, "Mithratic...initiates...would henceforth have the Sun Cross on their foreheads. The similarity to the cross of ashes made on the forehead on the Christian Ash Wednesday is striking. Some have suggested this to be an example of the early Christians borrowing from the Mithratic cult; others suggest that both cults were drawing upon the same prototype." Nabarz P. *The mysteries of Mithras: the pagan belief that shaped the Christian world*. Inner Traditions / Bear & Company, 2005, p. 36

92 B. Walker reported, "Ash Wednesday This allegedly Christian festival came from Roman paganism, which in turn took it from Vedic India. Ashes were considered the seed of the fire god Agni, with the power to absolve all sins...At Rome's New Year Feast of Atonement in March, people wore sackcloth and bathed in ashes to atone for their sins. Then as now, New Year's Eve was a festival for eating, drinking, and sinning, on the theory that all sins would be wiped out the following day. As the dying god of March, Mars took his worshippers' sins in with him into death. Therefore the carnival fell on dies martis, the Day of Mars. In English, this was Tuesday, because Mars was associated with the Saxon god Tiw. In French the carnival day was called Mardis Gras, "Fat Tuesday," the merrymaking day before Ash Wednesday." Walker B. *The woman's encyclopedia of myths and secrets*. HarperCollins, 1983, pp. 66-67

93 Pines, p.32

94 Cassian John. Conference 21, THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF ABBOT THEONAS. ON THE RELAXATION DURING THE FIFTY DAYS. Chapter 30

Bread involve a seven-day “fast” from leaven, around the time many call Easter, it may be that some associated with Rome and Egypt felt that an abstinence period would be appropriate, but the amount of time, as well as what they abstained from, varied.⁹⁵

The apostles most certainly did not have differing fasts with differing requirements (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10; 11:1). The forty-day Lenten fasts are not like the forty-day fasts mentioned in the Bible which involved absence from all food and water (Exodus 34:28; Luke 4:2).

Concerning Lent’s origins, notice what one scholar wrote:

A Lent of forty days was observed by worshipers of the Babylonian Ishtar and by the worshipers of the great Egyptian meditorial god Adonis or Osiris ... Among the pagans, this Lent period seems to have been an indispensable preliminary to the great annual (usually spring) festivals.⁹⁶

It is likely that the idea of a forty-day fast came from Alexandria in Egypt or from Greece and is related to the pagan goddess Ishtar. Since the Babylonians took over the Greeks and the Egyptians, that may have been when they started this practice.

95 Socrates Scholasticus wrote in the 5th century, “The fasts before Easter will be found to be differently observed among different people. Those at Rome fast three successive weeks before Easter, excepting Saturdays and Sundays. Those in Illyrica and all over Greece and Alexandria observe a fast of six weeks, which they term 'The forty days' fast.' Others commencing their fast from the seventh week before Easter, and fasting three-five days only, and that at intervals, yet call that time 'The forty days' fast.' ... some assign one reason for it, and others another, according to their several fancies. One can see also a disagreement about the manner of abstinence from food, as well as about the number of days. Some wholly abstain from things that have life: others feed on fish only of all living creatures: many together with fish, eat fowl also, saying that according to Moses, these were likewise made out of the waters. Some abstain from eggs, and all kinds of fruits: others partake of dry bread only; still others eat not even this: while others having fasted till the ninth hour, afterwards take any sort of food without distinction... Since however no one can produce a written command as an authority...” Socrates Scholasticus. Ecclesiastical History, Volume V, Chapter 22
96 Bacchiochi S. God's Festivals in Scripture and History, Part 1. Biblical Perspectives, Berrian Springs (MI), 1995, p. 108

Since early Christians did observe the Days of Unleavened Bread, repackaged pagan fasts were apparently substituted in various ways by the Greco-Romans.

Notice that the Apostle Paul warns against being involved in pagan observances:

¹⁴ Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team with unbelievers; how can uprightness and law-breaking be partners, or what can light and darkness have in common? ¹⁵ How can Christ come to an agreement with Beliar and what sharing can there be between a believer and an unbeliever? ¹⁶ The temple of God cannot compromise with false gods, and that is what we are -- the temple of the living God. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16, NJB)

¹⁹ What does this mean? That the dedication of food to false gods amounts to anything? Or that false gods themselves amount to anything? ²⁰ No, it does not; simply that when pagans sacrifice, what is sacrificed by them is sacrificed to demons who are not God. **I do not want you to share with demons.** ²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons as well; you cannot have a share at the Lord's table and the demons' table as well. ²² Do we really want to arouse the Lord's jealousy; are we stronger than he is? (1 Corinthians 10:19-22, NJB)

Whether from Egypt, Roman paganism, or other demonic sources, the one place Lent did not come from was the Bible. Nor did it come from early traditions of the first followers of Jesus.

Some think they are strong enough spiritually so they can mix paganism, but they are really arousing God's wrath according to the Apostle Paul.

Easter

Many people do not realize that Easter (Ishtar) was supposed to be Passover, moved to Sunday because of cowardice and for hatred of

Jews.⁹⁷

Notice what respected Protestant scholar J. Gieseler reported about the second century:

The most important in this festival was the passover day, the 14th of Nisan...In it they ate unleavened bread, probably like the Jews, eight days through...there is no trace of a yearly festival of the resurrection among them...the Christians of Asia Minor appealed in favor of their passover solemnity on the 14th Nisan to John.⁹⁸

Although Christians kept Passover on the 14th of Nisan, because of wishing to distance themselves because of revolts by the Jews in the eyes of the Roman authorities, many of the Greco-Romans in Jerusalem, Rome, and Alexandria (but not Asia Minor) decided to switch Passover to a Sunday. At first, they kept a version of Passover and it was not kept a resurrection holiday.

Notice also the following from G. Snyder:

The first Christians celebrated the death of Jesus with a Pascha meal (eucharist) on the lunar date of the Jewish Passover (note 1 Cor. 5:7-8).

At first there was no annual celebration of the resurrection. Eventually, in the gentile world, the day of resurrection was added to the Pascha festival. That day was Sunday.⁹⁹

Because some in Asia Minor and elsewhere did not go along with date change to Sunday, the Mithras worshipping Emperor Constantine called the Council of Nicea, which declared Sunday for the Greco-Romans. Constantine himself then declared:

97 Ibid, pp. 101-103

98 Gieseler, Johann Karl Ludwig. A Text-book of Church History. Translated by Samuel Davidson, John Winstanley Hull, Mary A. Robinson. Harper & brothers, 1857, Original from the University of Michigan, Digitized Feb 17, 2006, p. 166

99 Snyder GF. Irish Jesus, Roman Jesus: the formation of early Irish Christianity. Trinity Press International, 2002, p. 183

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way.¹⁰⁰

Christians should not hate Jews nor not observe God's Holy Day, just because many Jews make an attempt to do so.

Jesus never indicated that the Jewish race was detestable (He was a Jew) nor that He changed the date of Passover. Yet sun-worshipping Constantine concluded otherwise. And the Sunday observance is now known as Easter. But because sun-worshipping practices and the avoidance of practices that were considered too "Jewish" is really why Easter is observed when it is.

Many of its practices like Easter eggs, the Easter rabbit, and Easter fire came from paganism according to Roman Catholic sources.¹⁰¹

The Anglican bishop J.B. Lightfoot wrote:

...the Churches of Asia Minor...regulated their Easter festival by the Jewish Passover without regard to the day of the week, but...those of Rome and Alexandria and Gaul observed another rule; thus **avoiding even the semblance of Judaism.**¹⁰²

And the name Easter? This is a respelling of the sunrise goddess and 'queen of heaven' Ishtar:

Ishtar, she was both fertility and a war goddess. ... Easter or Astarte is in effect the same worship of an old Babylonian **sex** cult instituted by Semiramis the warrior queen who had a lust for blood.¹⁰³

100 Eusebius' Life of Constantine, Book III chapter 18

101 Holweck F. G. Easter. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume V. Robert Appleton Company. 1909

102 Lightfoot, Joseph Barber. Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations. Published by Macmillan, 1881, pp. 317, 331

103 Kush H. Faces of the Hamitic People. Xlibris Corporation, 2010, p. 164

Ishtar was seen as the personification of the planet Venus, and together with Shamash, the sun god, and Sin, the moon god, she formed an astral triad.¹⁰⁴

The Bible warns against serving the ‘queen of heaven’:

¹⁷ Do you not see what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁸ The children gather wood, the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough, to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and they pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke Me to anger. (Jeremiah 7:17-19)

The cakes were similar to ‘hot cross buns.’¹⁰⁵ The queen of heaven’?

Jeremiah 7...**Cakes to the queen of heaven** (v. 18). Probably a reference to the Babylonian fertility-goddess Ishtar, goddess of the planet Venus.¹⁰⁶

Christians should not have named a holiday after a pagan goddess whose practices the Bible condemns. Yet, most who profess Christianity do not seem to have a problem with that.

Maundy Thursday and the Eucharistic Host

As another ‘substitute’ for Passover, some keep ‘Maundy Thursday. Here is some of what *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches about it:

The feast of Maundy (or Holy) Thursday solemnly commemorates the institution of the Eucharist and is the oldest of the observances peculiar to Holy Week. In Rome various accessory ceremonies were early added to this commemoration... it brings around the anniversary of the institution of the Liturgy. ...

104 Littleton CS. *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*, Volume 6. Marshall Cavendish, 2005 p. 760

105 Platt C. *The Psychology of Social Life*. Dodd & Mead, 1922, p. 71

106 *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press

Holy Thursday was taken up with a succession of ceremonies of a joyful character. the baptism of neophytes, the reconciliation of penitents, the consecration of the holy oils, the washing of the feet, and commemoration of the Blessed Eucharist ...¹⁰⁷

The 'institution of the Eucharist' essentially is supposed to refer to Jesus' changing of symbols associated with Passover. The Church of Rome admits that it added ceremonies to it, that it was an annual event, and that footwashing was practiced. The Church of Rome

elsewhere admits that laypeople used to do footwashing,¹⁰⁸ but that is no longer its practice.

The 'Eucharistic host' that is now used by the Church of Rome differs from what the original Christians did.¹⁰⁹

Early Christians used unleavened bread, not a round host that looks like the 'sun' that was used in paganism.

Assumption of Mary

Early Christians originally did not venerate Jesus' mother Mary. So where did the idea of Mary's assumption come from?

Basically, from apocryphal literature in the fourth century (or possibly as early as the late third century)—but mainly even later than that. Although the Catholic Epiphanius tried to investigate it, he was

107 Leclercq H. Maundy Thursday. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 10. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911

108 Thurston H. Washing of Feet and Hands. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 15. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912

109 *The Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches: "The bread destined to receive Eucharistic Consecration is commonly called the host, and though this term may likewise be applied to the bread and wine of the Sacrifice, it is more especially reserved to the bread. According to Ovid the word comes from hostis, enemy: "Hostibus a domitis hostia nomen habet", because the ancients offered their vanquished enemies as victims to the gods. However, it is possible that hostia is derived from hostire, to strike, as found in Pacuvius....the first Christians...simply used the bread that served as food. It seems that the form differed but little from what it is in our day.".Leclercq H. "Host" The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 7. Nihil Obstat. June 1, 1910

uncertain as to when it really first developed—it clearly related to women who held to pagan goddess worship.¹¹⁰

The ancient Romans had a 1-3 day festival for the goddess Diana. On the first day she allegedly came to earth and on the third day, August 15, they apparently celebrated her assumption into heaven as the queen of heaven. This is the same day of the Catholic feast of the assumption of Mary.¹¹¹ Some do not consider this to be an accident or coincidental.¹¹²

There is a connection between Diana and various other goddesses and how many view Mary.¹¹³ Yet, the Catholic saint Augustine specifically referred to Diana as one of several “false and lying deities.”¹¹⁴

It is suspected that this was formally adopted in the Church of Rome at least partially because of the influence of Islam as Muhammad’s ‘virgin’ daughter Fatima allegedly also ascended into heaven. The ‘assumption’ is not a biblical Holy Day. It is a repackaged ‘queen of heaven’ (Jeremiah 7:17-19), pagan carryover.

Halloween/All Saints’ Day

While the idea of honoring the memory of the life and death of a person like a saint is not opposed to scripture (cf. Judges 11:38-40), veneration of saints and sacrificing to them is opposed to apostolic teachings.

110 Panarion of Epiphanius, 78.11.4. As cited in Shoemaker S. *The Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption*. Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 12

111 Kerr E. William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha: “a Kind of Keystone in the Universe.” Fordham Univ Press, 1985, p. 61

112 Green CMC. *Roman religion and the cult of Diana at Aricia*, Volume 0, Issues 521-85150. Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 62; Frazer JG. *The Magic Art and the Evolution of Kings* VI, Volume 1. Kessinger Publishing, 2006, pp. 14-17

113 Fischer-Hansen, p. 49

114 Augustine. *The Harmony of the Gospels*, Book I, Chapter 25. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 6, 1888

Satan wanted Christ to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:9), but Jesus refused (Matthew 4:10). Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-23) reportedly encouraged his followers to venerate/worship him.¹¹⁵

The Apostle Peter not only denounced Simon Magus, he forbade a Gentile from bowing down or paying homage to him (Acts 10:25-26). The Apostle Paul forbade Gentiles from sacrificing to him and Barnabas (Acts 14:11-18). The Apostles basically both argued that they were men and this should not be done. Early Christians understood this and did not do such. Over time, however, some heretics began to venerate relics in the late second century.

The veneration of claimed saints began to be a significant problem with the Greco-Roman churches in the fourth and later centuries, despite the fact it was not an apostolic practice.

Notice the following:

By incorporating familiar Pagan images, such as Celtic gods, the Green Man, and bicephalic heads within churches and cathedrals, church officials encouraged the populace to intermingle the two spiritual traditions in their mind supposedly easing their acceptance of the new religion and smoothing the transition from the old ways to the new.¹¹⁶

In a book, the above statement preceded a truncated version of the following that Pope “Gregory “the Great” wrote around 600 A.D.:

Tell Augustine that he should be no means destroy the temples of the gods but rather the idols within those temples. Let him, after he has purified them with holy water, place altars and relics of the saints in them. For, if those temples are well built, they should be converted **from the worship of demons** to the service of the true God. ... Let them therefore, on the day of the dedication of their churches, or on the feast of the martyrs whose relics are

115 Irenaeus. *Adversus haereses*, Book 1, Chapter 23, Verses 1-5

116 Pesznecker S. *Gargoyles: From the Archives of the Grey School of Wizardry*. Career Press, 2006, p. 85

preserved in them, build themselves huts around their one-time temples and celebrate the occasion with religious feasting. **They will sacrifice and eat the animals not any more as an offering to the devil, but for the glory of God** to whom, as the giver of all things, they will give thanks for having been satiated.¹¹⁷

Pope Gregory advocated the incorporation on pagan practices. Yet, the Bible opposes this and these type of sacrifices as demonic (1 Corinthians 10:20-21). Furthermore, the Bible teaches that after the sacrifice of Jesus that there is no need for animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1-10). Allowing the above for 'saints days' shows that this is also relic of paganism and that they are truly demonic holidays.

Many dress biblically inappropriately (cf. 1 Timothy 2:9) and sometimes also as witches (which the Bible condemns— Exodus 22:8) on Halloween. This is not a biblically-appropriate celebration and certainly was not an early Christian one.

All Saints' Day was declared in the seventh century, and later moved to November 1st and the evening before became known as Halloween.¹¹⁸

October 31 was a date the ancient Druids observed:

The Druids, and order of priests in ancient Gaul and Britain, believed that on Halloween, ghosts, spirits, fairies, witches, and elves came out to harm people. ... From these Druid beliefs come the present-day use of witches, ghosts, and cats in Halloween festivities...The custom of using leaves, pumpkins, and corn stalks as Halloween decorations comes from the Druids. The early peoples of Europe also had a festival similar to the Druid holiday...In the 700s, the Roman Catholic Church named November 1 as *All Saints' Day*. **The**

117 Gregory I: Letter to Abbot Mellitus. Epsitola 76, PL 77: 1215-1216

118 Mershman F. All Saints' Day. The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 1. Nihil Obstat. March 1, 1907. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907

old pagan customs and the Christian feast day were combined into the Halloween festival.¹¹⁹

It may be of interest to consider what a Catholic writer wrote:

Why would a pope put the Catholic celebration of the dead on top of the pagans' celebrations of the dead? Because the Catholic feasts are in continuity and fulfill the meaning of the pagan ones.¹²⁰

It is a fact that many associated with the Church of Rome relish and boast about pagan connections for their faith. It is the Bible that they, and all, should look to as the source of doctrine (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16) and it condemns using pagan forms of worship (Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Jeremiah 10:2-6; 1 Corinthians 10:21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Christmas

The Bible never endorses the celebration of birthdays, including that of Jesus. The early Church of Rome did not celebrate Christmas nor any other birthday. Birthday observances were still condemned in the late 3rd century by Arnobius.¹²¹

Furthermore, Tertullian warned that to participate in the winter celebrations with wreaths and gift-giving made one behold to pagan gods. There was one such celebration known as the Saturnalia that was celebrated by the heathen in late December.

119 Halloween. World Book Encyclopedia, vol 9. Chicago, 1966: 25-26

120 Killian Brian. Halloween, as autumn celebration, reminder God's name is hallowed. Catholic Online International News. 10/31/06.

http://www.catholic.org/international/international_story.php?id=21818

¹²¹ Against the Heathen, Book I, Chapter 64

The claimed “father of Latin theology,” Tertullian denounced winter celebrations, such as Saturnalia (from a pagan deity whose name meant plentiful)¹²² which morphed into Christmas.

Around the time of Tertullian, the Roman Bishops Zephyrinus (199-217) and Callistus (217-222) had a reputation of compromise and corruption (and this is confirmed by such Roman Catholic saints such as Hippolytus¹²³ and allowed people in their church that compromised with paganism, etc.

The Roman Saturnalia and the Persian Mithraism themselves were adaptations of an even earlier pagan religion – that of the ancient Babylonian mystery cult. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the reborn Nimrod as the newborn Tammuz by worshipping an evergreen tree. The Bible condemns worship involving evergreen trees (Deuteronomy 12:2-3; Jeremiah 3:13; 10:2-6).

The Babylonians also celebrated a rebirth of the sun during the season of the winter solstice. December 25th was eventually chosen as the date of Jesus’ birthday, because the Saturnalia and other sun god worship happened at that time of the year:

In 354 A.D., Bishop Liberius of Rome ordered the people to celebrate on December 25. He probably chose this date because the people of Rome already observed it as the Feast of Saturn, celebrating the birthday of the sun.¹²⁴

122 Tertullian wrote, “The Minervalia are as much Minerva’s, as the Saturnalia Saturn’s; Saturn’s, which must necessarily be celebrated even by little slaves at the time of the Saturnalia. New-year’s gifts likewise must be caught at, and the Septimontium kept; and all the presents of Midwinter and the feast of Dear Kinsmanship must be exacted; the schools must be wreathed with flowers; the flamens’ wives and the aediles sacrifice; the school is honoured on the appointed holy-days. The same thing takes place on an idol’s birthday; every pomp of the devil is frequented. Who will think that these things are befitting to a Christian master, unless it be he who shall think them suitable likewise to one who is not a master?” Tertullian. On Idolatry, Chapter X. Translated by S. Thelwall. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 3. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. American Edition, 1885

¹²³ Hippolytus. Refutation of All Heresies, Book IX, Chapter VI. Excerpted from Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 5. Edited by Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. American Edition, 1886.

¹²⁴ Sechrist EH. Christmas. World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 3. Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, Chicago, 1966, pp. 408-417

Helios Mithras is one god...Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra, and the sixteenth of each month was sacred to him as mediator. **The 25 December was observed as his birthday, the natalis invicti, the rebirth of the winter-sun, unconquered by the rigours of the season.**¹²⁵

Emperor Constantine had been the follower of the sun-god Mithras, who was considered to be the unconquered sun and was one born from a rock in a below ground cave. Perhaps because of this, his mother Helena decide to believe the myth that Jesus was born in a below ground rocky cave.

Rome now teaches this (and this author has seen that 'nativity' displayed multiple times in Vatican City), but in the third century one of its supporters, Commodianus, condemned the rock deity:

The unconquered one was born from a rock, if he is regarded as a god. Now tell us, then, on the other hand, which is the first of these two. The rock has overcome the god: then the creator of the rock has to be sought after. Moreover, you still depict him also as a thief; although, if he were a god, he certainly did not live by theft. Assuredly he was of earth, and of a monstrous nature. And he turned other people's oxen into his caves; just as did Cacus, that son of Vulcan.¹²⁶

Jesus was not born from a rock, yet that is partially how His birth is now portrayed. It is also not true to teach that He was born on December 25th. Scholars recognize that shepherds would not have been out with their flocks in the field (like the Bible shows in Luke 2:8) as late as December 25th and that the biblically-mentioned (Luke 2:1-5) "census would have been impossible in winter."¹²⁷

125 Arendzen J. Mithraism. The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume X. Nihil Obstat, October 1, 1911. Remy Lafort, S.T.D., Censor. Imprimatur. +John Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911

126 Commodianus. On Christian Discipline. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 4. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885

¹²⁷ Christmas. The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1908

Many of the practices and customs associated with Christmas come from paganism as real scholars will admit. Neither Jesus' apostles nor their early followers observed Christmas.

Repackaged Pagan Holidays

While the Bible does not prohibit secular holidays (like sober independence day observances), early Christians did NOT pray to dead saints nor observe anything like All Saint's Day nor Christmas. Many pagan deities were essentially changed from being the 'god of something' to being called the 'saint of something.'

Some of the pagan practices may have changed, but the repackaged demonic holidays are still not Christian, nor are they those that Jesus and His early followers kept. Many holidays that people keep came from paganism, and even have ties to the ancient Babylonian mystery religion. When God sent Nehemiah to help the children of Israel who had been influenced by Babylon, notice what Nehemiah said he did:

³⁰ I cleansed them of everything pagan. (Nehemiah 13:30)

The New Testament warns of a compromised faith and "Mystery Babylon the Great" (Revelation 17:5). Notice what the Bible teaches that God's people should do in regards to "Babylon the Great":

⁴ Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. (Revelation 18:4)

Christians should flee temptation and sin (1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22), not embrace it nor promote it. They should not combine pagan practices in with the worship of the true God (1 Corinthians 10:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18), even it is a tradition (Matthew 15:3-9).

11. God's Holy Days or Lies?

Which days should be kept by the faithful?

Over 1600 years ago, God's Holy Days were condemned by the anti-Semite, John Chrysostom, who is now considered to be a Catholic and Orthodox saint. Several years ago, the Protestant publication *Christianity Today* actually called John Chrysostom the "Early church's greatest preacher."¹²⁸

John Chrysostom publicly preached against the Fall holy days in 387 A.D., because some who professed Christ were observing them. He specifically mentioned the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement ('fast' above), and the Feast of Tabernacles:¹²⁹

It is important to understand that John Chrysostom must have realized that the second century church in his region kept Passover at the same time the Jews did, and that the Catholic Church still kept Pentecost. Thus, by preaching what he did, John Chrysostom preached against his own church as the Roman and Orthodox Catholics claim to keep both Passover and Pentecost—as both of those festivals would be part of "all of them together."

Furthermore, John Chrysostom actually once wrote in favor of a "festival of the Jews" called Pentecost.¹³⁰ Thus, he admitted that

128 John Chrysostom Early church's greatest preacher. *Christianity Today*, August 8, 2008

129 He stated, "The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the feast of Trumpets, the feast of Tabernacles, the fasts. There are many in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to watch the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this perverse custom from the Church right now...If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies...Does God hate their festivals and do you share in them? He did not say this or that festival, but all of them together.

The wicked and unclean fast of the Jews is now at our doors. Thought it is a fast, do not wonder that I have called it unclean...But now that the devil summons your wives to the feast of the Trumpets and they turn a ready ear to this call, you do not restrain them. You let them entangle themselves in accusations of ungodliness, you let them be dragged off into licentious ways." John Chrysostom. *Homily II Against the Jews I:1; III:4*. Preached at Antioch, Syria on Sunday, September 5, 387 A.D.

130 Chrysostom J. *The homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople: on the Acts of the Apostles, Volume 1, Homily IV*. John Henry Parker, 1851, pp. 53-56

after Jesus' resurrection, the faithful needed to be present at what was then considered to be a "Jewish feast."

If God was opposed to all of those days, why would the apostles have kept them? The obvious reason is that they were following Jesus' example and had no reason to believe that they were somehow done away.

As mentioned before, the New Testament calls one of the so-called "Jewish" holy days "great." Notice the following from a Catholic translation:

³⁷ And in the last, the **great day of the festivity** JESUS stood, and cried (John 7:37, Rheims New Testament).

So who is right?

Those who follow Jesus' practices or those who condemn them?

Recall that John Chrysostom, in this case, somewhat correctly stated:

"If the Jewish ceremonies are venerable and great, ours are lies."

So which days should be observed? Which have a "great day" according to the Bible?

Which days are lies?

John Chrysostom supported days with pagan ties such as Christmas and Easter. His logic for Christmas on December 25th was also clearly wrong and based upon lies and misinformation.¹³¹

It should be obvious that God's days are not lies, but John Chrysostom's (and those of churches who adopted those days that he promoted) were clearly lies. Even the Catholic saint Thomas

131 Addis WE, Arnold T. A Catholic Dictionary: Containing Some Account of the Doctrine, Discipline, Rites, Ceremonies, Councils, and Religious Orders of the Catholic Church. Benziger Brothers, 1893, p. 178

Aquinas wrote that the Sabbath and basically all the biblical Holy Days had meaning for Christians.¹³²

Interestingly *The Catholic Encyclopedia* includes the report, “the Paulicians have often been described as a survival of early and pure Christianity.¹³³ An 11th century Greco-Roman wrote that the Paulicians “represent our worship of God as worship of idol. As if we, who honour the sign of the cross and the holy pictures, were still engaged in worshiping devils.”¹³⁴

The realization that many who professed Christ improperly observed demonic holidays is not new and has been condemned by some throughout the centuries.

Traditions and/or the Bible?

Relatively few people on the planet even try to keep God’s Holy Days. Most who claim to have a religion they associate with the Bible keep other days.

Some keep non-biblical religious holidays because of pressure from family members. Some will not keep the biblical Holy Days because of pressures from their society and/or their employers.

Jesus warned that those who followed Him should expect to have problems with family members (Matthew 10:36) and the world. He did not tell them to compromise with a world that would hate His true followers (John 15:18-19), but to strive for perfection (Matthew 5:48).

The New Living Translation teaches the following about God’s people:

132 Aquinas T. *The Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Second and Revised Edition, 1920. Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican. Question 102. The causes of the ceremonial precepts. Article 4

133 Fortescue A. Paulicians. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911

134 Conybeare F.C. Addend ix III in: *The Key of Truth: A Manual of the Paulician Church of Armenia*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1898, p. 149

³ They do not compromise with evil, and they walk only in his paths. (Psalm 119:3)

Are you willing to compromise with evil? **Satan tries to make sin look good** (Genesis 3:1-6) and appears as “an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Will you keep HIS holidays even if they *appear* good to you?

The Greco-Roman faiths tend to consider that the observance of their holidays is based on tradition—but often those traditions began in paganism. Since many of the past (and present) leaders in their faiths endorsed these traditions, many act as if they are acceptable to God.

While traditions that are consistent with the word of God are fine (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15), those in conflict with the Bible should not be kept. Notice the New Testament makes that clear:

⁸ Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

³ He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ... ⁷ Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸ "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. ⁹ And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'" (Matthew 15:3,7-9)

The word of God mentions that many have accepted traditions that they should not and it encourages repentance from those once they realize this:

¹⁹ O Lord, my strength and my fortress, My refuge in the day of affliction, The Gentiles shall come to You from the ends of

the earth and say, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, Worthlessness and unprofitable things." (Jeremiah 16:19)

The Bible teaches that foreign religious observations are demonic:

¹⁶ They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. ¹⁷ They sacrificed to demons, not to God, To gods they did not know, To new gods, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear. (Deuteronomy 32:16-17)

Notice confirmation of this concept from the late Roman Catholic French Cardinal Jean-Guenole-Marie Daniélou:

The pagan world and the Christian Church are completely incompatible; one cannot simultaneously serve both God and idols.¹³⁵

Truly, the pagan world and the Christian Church are completely incompatible; one cannot simultaneously serve both God and idols.

Yet, many, including in his church, do so today when they observe pagan holidays that have been modified with Christian terms and some changes of practice. Understand that Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32). God's holy days free us from paganism.

Consider that the Apostle Paul warned:

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

¹³⁵ Daniélou J. *The Origins of Latin Christianity*. Translated by David Smith and John Austin Baker. Westminster Press, 1977, p. 440

"I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

¹⁷ Therefore

"Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

¹⁸ 'I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Notice God will be a Father to those who will not be part of pagan practices. Not a Father to those that embrace them as part of worship.

Although some act like having practices that the pagans had pleases God, they are deluding themselves:

³² You say, "We want to be like the nations, like the peoples of the world, who serve wood and stone." But what you have in mind will never happen. (Ezekiel 20:32, NIV)

²⁶ Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. (Ezekiel 22:26, NIV)

God says it makes a difference. Instead of this pleasing Him, including pagan practices will bring His wrath (Ezekiel 30:13)! Defending sensual worldly practices is demonic (cf. James 3:13-15).

God's Holy Days or What?

The Bible refers to God's feasts as 'holy convocations' (e.g. Numbers 28:26; 29:12) or 'holy festivals' (cf. Isaiah 30:29).

The Bible repeatedly condemns pagan observances as wrong and demonic (1 Corinthians 10:20-21; 1 Timothy 4:1). The Bible says to NOT combine non-biblical celebrations into the worship of God (Deuteronomy 32; Jeremiah 10; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

Yet many have decided to observe a worship calendar that the Bible does not endorse. Using practices that the Apostle John associates with antichrists (1 John 2:18-19).

The non-biblical holidays are promoted by demons and have helped obscure God's plan for billions over the ages.

Jesus said God wanted to be worshiped in truth:

²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24, NJB)

Repackaged demonic holidays do not honor the true God. God wants you to trust Him and do things His way, not yours (Proverbs 3:5-6).

The biblical Holy Days help picture God's plan of salvation. Starting with the sacrifice of Jesus at Passover, to striving to live 'unleavened' lives, to the calling of the firstfruits in this age (Pentecost), to the trumpets of Revelation and the resurrection, to the reminder of Satan's role in our sins and Christ's atonement sacrifice, to picturing the millennial kingdom of God on earth (Feast of Tabernacles), to the realization that God will offer salvation to all (Last Great Day), parts of God's plan are revealed and made more tangible to Christians.

The Bible tells Christians to imitate the Apostle Paul as he imitated Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Jesus kept the biblical Holy Days (Luke 2:41-42; 22:7-19; John 7:10-38; 13). Shouldn't you follow His example as He taught (John 13:12-15)?

The Apostle Paul kept the biblical Holy Days (Acts 18:21; 20:6,16; 21:18-24; 27:9; 28:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 16:8). Paul warned of those who would compromise them with demonic practices (1

Corinthians 10:19-21). People who claim to follow the God of the Bible should be cleansed from paganism (cf. Nehemiah 13:30; 2 Peter 1:9).

The Apostle John kept the biblical Holy Days, but warned of people claiming to be Christian were not following his practices:

¹⁸ Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:18-19)

Should Christians keep the same biblical Holy Days as His apostles, like John kept? John was writing that those who falsely claim to be Christian who do not follow his practices are functioning as antichrists.

When it comes to Holy Days and holiday, who are we to listen to? The word of God or traditions of men? While there can be proper places for tradition, none should accept tradition that is in conflict with the word of God.

Since the word of God is profitable for doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16), perhaps we should learn from Peter and the other apostles' response to the religious leaders of their day:

²⁹ We ought to obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)

Will you follow the examples of Jesus and the Apostles, and keep God's Holy Days His way, and not allow tradition of councils of men to stop you?

Will you listen to those who "proclaim to be holy convocations" (Leviticus 23:8,21,24,27,35,36), which are God's biblical festivals (Leviticus 23:37)?

Jesus said:

²¹ My brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it. (Luke 8:21)

Are you truly one of Jesus' brothers? Christians are supposed to be (Romans 8:29). We are to be set apart by the truth (John 17:19).

Will you and/or your house hear the word of God and do it? Will you keep God's Holy Days or traditions that are demonically-inspired?

¹⁴ Serve the Lord! ¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" like the pagan gods "in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14-15).

Choose God's Holy Days.

Holy Day Calendar

Holy Day*	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Passover	Apr 15	Apr 5	Apr 22	Apr 12	Apr 1	Apr 21	Apr 10
Unleavened Bread	Apr 16-22	Apr 6-12	Apr 23-29	Apr 13-19	Apr 2-8	Apr 22-28	Apr 11-17
Pentecost	Jun 5	May 28	Jun 16	Jun 1	May 24	Jun 13	Jun 4
Trumpets	Sep 26	Sep 16	Oct 3	Sep 23	Sep 12	Oct 2	Sep 21
Atonement	Oct 5	Sep 25	Oct 12	Oct 2	Sep 21	Oct 11	Sep 30
Feast of Tabernacles	Oct 10-16	Sep 30- Oct 6	Oct 17-23	Oct 7-13	Sep 26- Oct 2	Oct 16-22	Oct 5-11
Last Great Day	Oct 17	Oct 7	Oct 24	Oct 14	Oct 3	Oct 23	Oct 12

*** All Holy Days start the evening before, at sunset.**

Continuing Church of God

The USA office of the *Continuing Church of God* is located at: 1036 W. Grand Avenue, Grover Beach, California, 93433 USA.

Continuing Church of God (CCOG) Websites

CCOG.ASIA This site has focus on Asia and has various articles in multiple Asian languages, as well as some items in English.

CCOG.IN This site is targeted towards those of Indian heritage. It has materials in English language and various Indian languages.

CCOG.EU This site is targeted toward Europe. It has materials in multiple European languages.

CCOG.NZ This site is targeted towards New Zealand.

CCOG.ORG This is the main website of the *Continuing Church of God*. It serves people on all continents. It contains articles, links, and videos, including weekly and Holy Day sermons.

CCOGAFRICA.ORG This site is targeted towards those in Africa.

CCOGCANADA.CA This site is targeted towards those in Canada.

CDLIDD.ES La Continuación de la Iglesia de Dios. This is the Spanish language website for the *Continuing Church of God*.

PNIND.PH Patuloy na Iglesia ng Diyos. This is the Philippines website with information in English and Tagalog.

News and History Websites

COGWRITER.COM This website is a major proclamation tool and has news, doctrine, historical articles, videos, and prophetic updates.

CHURCHHISTORYBOOK.COM This is an easy to remember website with articles and information on church history.

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