

*A Study of
The Feast Days
Given to Israel*

*What Should and What Should
Not Be Observed by Christians
Today?*

A Study of

THE FEAST DAYS

Given to Israel

Just before His ascension to heaven, after His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ gave the great commission to His disciples-- and to us. He said:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations ... teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Thus the followers of Christ have a definite work and a great obligation. They are to carry the Gospel to all nations and they are to teach the observance of certain things. They are to practice the *rite* which Jesus gave, that of water baptism. In the portion of the verse omitted in the above quotation Jesus said, "baptizing them in the name of...." For this, Jesus set the example by Himself being baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan. The *ceremonies* or ordinances which Jesus taught were the Lord's Supper and feet washing. He gave direct command that these should be done: "This do in remembrance of me," and "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (Luke 22:19 and John 13:15). The *day* which Jesus taught us to observe was the Sabbath. By His example He taught the right way to keep

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the Sabbath—to worship God and to do good on that day. The seventh-day Sabbath is the Lord's day, for He said:

Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

These are the only rites and ceremonies which were directly commanded by Jesus. But Jesus also kept the commandments of God. We note this in the record of His life, and He also said, "... I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10). And He commanded us to follow Him and so we therefore also must keep or observe the commandments of God.

The special question for us at this time is: what special days or festivals has God commanded Christians to observe?

What About Popular Church Holidays?

Did God or Jesus at any time direct or command Christians to observe or commemorate the birth of Christ? Is there any instruction or example for commemorating the resurrection of Christ, or a 40-day period of self-denial previous to such commemoration? Is there any Bible instruction or command to observe the first day of the week as sacred time instead of the seventh? The answer to all these questions is the same, and it is, "No!" The un-Biblical observances celebrated by most churches at the times above mentioned, are all remnants of ancient paganism. Christians who take the Bible and the Bible only

will not observe any time as sacred which the Bible does not teach as such. They observe only that which the Bible plainly teaches.

What About the Annual Feasts of Israel?

We are now brought to the special question of this study. We may agree that the Bible does not teach, and Christians should not observe, the holidays of pagan origin. We may agree that the Bible does teach the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. But what about the annual festivals which Israel was commanded to observe? There are people who are teaching by means of the radio and by printed page that in Old Testament times God commanded the observance of seven annual days or periods, and that these have been carried over into the Christian age and that Christians should practice and teach the observance of these times. In the study to follow we shall show from the Bible that (1) Israel was commanded to keep just three annual "feasts"—each kept for a designated period of time—and two other special days, each with a special significance; and (2) none of these annual feasts or special days are to be kept by Christians. There is no definite Bible record that any Christian since the death of Christ ever kept them, and no Bible record of instruction to keep them. It is important that we, as Christians, be faithful in doing all that God has commanded us to do, but it is equally important that we refrain from doing or teaching as a sacred duty anything which God has not commanded us to do.

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

The first of the annual days which Israel was commanded to observe was the Passover and the accompanying Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is first given in the 12th chapter of the book of Exodus. This was at the time that Israel left the land of Egypt. Here we find the beginning of the laws which God gave through Moses. Some say that this instruction was given "long before the law of Moses." Actually it was given only *three months* before Israel came to Sinai where God gave the Ten Commandments and then gave additional laws through Moses. (See Exodus 19:1-3.) Men may try to make a distinction by saying that only what God gave through Moses at a *certain time* comprised the Law of Moses. But God makes it very clear that EVERYTHING which He gave in original form THROUGH MOSES is the Law of Moses. Note the following clear distinction:

... only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them (2 Kings 21:8).

The 12th chapter of Exodus gives the laws of the Passover and of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—given through Moses. In Leviticus 23 these laws are repeated, and again in Deuteronomy 16 we find the same laws of the Feast Days given through Moses. Before the sacrifice of Christ the people of God were

justified, or considered righteous in the sight of God, by obeying the Law of Moses. One of the last verses in the Old Scriptures calls upon Israel to "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant... with the statutes and judgments" (Malachi 4:4). There was, however, no complete justification or real salvation in the keeping of the Law of Moses (or the Book of the Law) any more than there is today by just adhering to God's laws. People before Christ had to accept Him as their coming Saviour just the same as we must accept Him as the One who came, died, and shed His blood for the sin of the world. Keeping law without accepting Christ will provide no justification or salvation whatsoever. This can be seen by the following Scripture:

And by him [Jesus] all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).

That part of the Law of Moses in which we find the first description of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, originated in Egypt. The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread originated in Egypt because that is where the events took place of which they were to be a memorial. The first Passover was observed by the killing of the lamb and eating it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs just as it was continued to be taught and observed later in the history of Israel. But the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to immediately follow the Passover, could not be observed correctly this first time. The first

day of the feast, which was the 15th of Nisan, was commanded to be a "holy convocation." Note the meaning of this:

And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them... (Exodus 12:16).

This the 15th of Nisan was to be a Sabbath on which they were not to exert themselves to work. But it was on *that* day that Israel began the journey from Egypt, which entailed a great deal of exertion and work. But this did not break the law, for the feast was given as a memorial of the event which took place on that day and therefore could not properly be observed until the first anniversary of that event. In the same way the other things which were to be a part of the observance of the memorial were not performed that first time. These *other things* were the sacrifices which were an integral part of the memorial.

The Sacrifices of the Feast

In Leviticus 23 where God gave, through Moses, the full instructions for the keeping of the annual festivals, we find concerning the observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days... (Leviticus 23:7, 8).

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread originated as a part of the Law of Moses. They were given to be a memorial of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12:14, 17), and a required part of their observance was the sacrifice of the lamb and the offering of burnt offerings. Therefore since Christ has fulfilled all sacrifices, the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are not to be observed by Christians.

The Feast of Pentecost

The next annual feast which God gave through Moses, as recorded in Leviticus 23, is Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks. The instruction with this was that it was to be observed "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof..." (Lev. 23:16). Thus it is clear that the Feast of Pentecost was not kept until at least 40 years after it was commanded—not until Israel had lived in the land of Canaan at least long enough to plant grain and reap the first sheaves. The observance of this feast depended on the people being engaged in agriculture in the land of promise. There was no other means by which it could be observed or kept. And when the observance was held after they arrived in Canaan, the ceremony involved many special sacrifices. These sacrifices were not just usual sacrifices which would be offered every day, but they were to be very special. Note the detailed instructions in Leviticus 23:12-20. This is too lengthy to quote, but turn and read it and note that

baked with the first grain of the year, were to be offered along with seven lambs, a bullock and two rams, with meat offerings and drink offerings. After that there were to be offered a kid of the goats and two more lambs—all on the day of Pentecost. If this was in some way a type of the beginning of the work of the early church, it met its fulfillment and came to an end. When the shadow reaches the real object, the shadow ends.

It has been said by some that the 120 disciples in the upper room were observing or keeping the day of Pentecost. Evidently they were not doing any servile work as they were "with one accord in one place." Jesus had told them to tarry at Jerusalem until they received power from on high. So far as we know they had been tarrying in the upper room "with one accord in one place" all of those days. There is no hint that they were in any way giving special regard to the day of Pentecost. Why did the Holy Spirit come on that day? It seems likely that it was because many Jews were gathered in Jerusalem in celebration of the day, and it made a wonderful opportunity for the newly Spirit-filled apostles to bear witness for the Lord. Certainly there is nothing in the record to indicate that any special attention was being called to the day or that Christians in the future were to observe that day in any way.

The Blowing of Trumpets

In Leviticus 23:23-35 we read:
And the Lord spake unto Moses, say-

13

these were necessary in the observance of the feast of Pentecost. No instruction for observing it any other way was ever given. To arrange any other means of observance would be adding to the Word of God and there is terrible condemnation for people who would do that. (See Proverbs 30:6 and Revelation 22:18.)

What About the Types?

Those who teach that Christians today are to keep the times of the Feast days, while not keeping the sacrifices and other things which were originally commanded, say that these feasts were types of the plan of salvation. They proceed to outline a detailed explanation of the things which they *think* were represented by the day of Pentecost and the other feasts. But *none* of this explanation is found in the *Bible*. It is all the imaginations of man.

It all sounds good and plausible, and after one is convinced that those interpretations are true, he uses them as a reason for observing the feast days. But a fallacy built upon a fallacy is just a greater fallacy. Our beliefs and practices must be based on a definite "thus saith the Lord" and not on the invented explanations of man. The Bible gives no hint of any *type* for the Feast of Pentecost. The gospel work of the apostles began on that day as recorded in Acts 2. This would seem to correspond to the very first sheaf of the "harvest." But the first sheaf of the harvest was brought at the beginning of the 50-days period which was 50 days *before* the day of Pentecost. On that day, two loaves of bread

12

ing, speak unto the children of Israel saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein: but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.

This is all that is said of this special day. While it is listed among the feasts in Leviticus 23 it is not officially called a *feast* there or in any other place in the Bible. It was one of the annual sabbaths but should not be listed as a feast day. Apparently it was to call attention to and prepare the Israelites for the Day of Atonement. If Christians are now to keep the Day of Atonement, there might be some argument for observing the memorial of blowing of trumpets.

The Day of Atonement

One of the most sacred days in Israel was the Day of Atonement. It is not called a feast or a fast, but simply a "holy convocation" or sabbath.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath (Leviticus 23:26, 27, 32).

14

Very little description of the special events of the Day of Atonement is given in this chapter. It is mentioned in verse 28 that its purpose is the making of atonement for the people before God, but no details are given. The details of those things that were to be done in observance of this day are given in Leviticus 16. Here we find that this was the one day in the year in which the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle or temple. He entered this place three times, first, with incense that a cloud of incense smoke might cover the mercy seat; second, with the blood of a bullock which he sprinkled on the mercy seat in atonement for his own sins, and, third, with the blood of a goat which he sprinkled on the mercy seat for the sins of the people. After that, the sins of the people were confessed by the priest with his hands on the head of a live goat, and this goat was taken away and let go in the wilderness.

These things were done each year on the Day of Atonement while Israel had the Tabernacle, and later, the temple.

The Type of the Day of Atonement

The day of atonement and the things done on that day were a type of the atonement which Christ made for us by His death on the cross and His ascension to heaven. This is one of the most complete and clearly explained types in the Bible. No one need try to make up ideas as to the meaning or the type because the Bible gives the explanation.

15

This explanation is found in the book of Hebrews chapters nine and ten. In chapter nine we have a description of the Tabernacle with its Holy Place and Most Holy Place and the golden ark and other sacred furnishings. The services of the Day of Atonement are carefully described. We read:

But into the second [the most holy place] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. Which was a figure for type for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices. . . . (Hebrews 9:7, 9).

Here the Bible refers to these events as in the past and tells us they were a type for that time thus indicating that they are no longer to be practiced. And in further explanation the Bible says:

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others. . . . but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:12, 25, 26).

And if we read on in chapter 10 we will find that it is further explained that the ceremonies and sacrifices which made up the Day of Atonement were brought to an end

when Christ made the great sacrifice of Himself. The type was fulfilled and there is no instruction in any way for us to commemorate the type by observing the day as an annual Sabbath.

From Even to Even

In the description of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 23:32 we find the instruction that the sabbath was to be observed "from even unto even." Sabbathkeepers in general use this verse as one of the Bible references which teaches us the time-period of the seventh-day Sabbath. But since the verse in which this is found is referring to the Day of Atonement as a sabbath, some have said we are inconsistent in using this for the seventh-day Sabbath and not also observing the Day of Atonement. But we are NOT inconsistent! We have clearly seen that the Day of Atonement was a type which has been fulfilled. Any observance of it now would be valueless and a denial of the atoning work of Christ. But the fact that when it was in effect it was to be kept from "even unto even" is useful information to us in understanding the time of the sabbaths which were then in effect, and of the seventh-day Sabbath which is still in effect for us today. Thus it is perfectly proper to refer to Leviticus 23:32 as it is in the above explanation.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles is first mentioned, although not called by that name, in Exodus 23. We read:

Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread... and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field (Exodus 23:14-16).

That the last mentioned feast, called the Feast of Ingathering, is the same as the Feast of Tabernacles is shown by comparing the verses with the record in Leviticus 23. We read:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath (Leviticus 23:33, 34, 39).

In comparing the passage in Exodus with that in Leviticus we see that this was a kind of thanksgiving celebration at the close of the harvest. It was the feast of harvest and also the feast of tabernacles. It commemorated the Lord's blessing in giving a harvest, and it also commemorated the time when Israel was in the wilderness and dwelt in temporary houses or tents, also called booths. We read:

And ye shall take you on the first

day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook... Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt... (Leviticus 23:40, 42, 43).

Not Kept for Forty Years

We have noted that the Feast of Pentecost was not to be kept until Israel was in the promised land and had reaped a harvest (Lev. 23:10), and, while not specifically mentioned, this was evidently also true of the Feast of Tabernacles. It was the feast of harvest and Israel had no harvest until they reached Canaan. It also was the commemoration of the time when Israel dwelt in booths in the wilderness. They could not commemorate this while it was still in process but only after it was all over. There is no record of any special provision being made by which Israel could keep the Feast of Pentecost and Tabernacles in a spiritual sense before they got to Canaan and had a harvest. Pentecost was for the special purpose of offering thanks to God for the first-fruits of the harvest. In Palestine the first grain was harvested about fifty days after the time of Passover and so that was the time commanded for the feast. This would have, and did have, meaning so long as the worship of God centered at the tem-

of, as in verse 41:
It shall be a statute for ever in your generations.

and verse 43 adds:
That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. . . .

Notice how clearly this shows that these things were to be in effect for the *generations* of Israel—those whose fathers came out of Egypt. The feasts were given especially to Israel and would last as long as the sacrifices and tabernacle service. This is easily proven by reading in the very next chapter of Leviticus—chapter 24. Concerning the lights upon the candlestick in the holy place of the tabernacle we read:

. . . cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the veil of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: it shall be a statute for ever in your generations (Leviticus 24:2, 3).

Notice that the lamps were to burn FOR EVER IN YOUR GENERATIONS. These are exactly the same words as are used to describe the time of the feast days. But surely God did not intend that the lamps on the candlesticks in the tabernacle or temple should burn after that tabernacle had ceased to exist. And Hebrews nine states definitely that the tabernacle, or sanctuary, was part of the Old Covenant and that it was a figure or type

ple in Jerusalem. There, first grain would be ripe at the date of Pentecost. But the gospel is for all the world, and the worship of God is no longer centered in a temple in Palestine. The first fruits of harvest is at many different times in different parts of the world. A feast celebrating the first-fruits of harvest could not be held at the same time of year in all the world. Thus we can see why this celebration came to its end when the death of Christ ended the services of the temple in Jerusalem, as a center of worship. The same is true of the Feast of Tabernacles which commemorated the end of the harvest. It would not be possible to celebrate the end of harvest at the same time of year in Palestine, Africa, South America, North America and Europe. These feasts were for Israel, and their purpose was completed when Christ died on the cross and the gospel went to all the world.

Were the Feasts Commanded to Be Kept Forever?

It is contended by some that no matter when the feasts were given, to whom they were given, or what their purpose was, that God said they must be kept *forever*, and that means at least as long as the world stands, if not longer. Let us notice the verses very carefully where this is mentioned. In Leviticus 23 we find this mentioned in verses 14, 21, 31 and 41. In each case it is stated thus:

It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations,

to last only until the sacrifice of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, God caused the great curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place of the temple, to rip in two, from the top to the bottom, signifying that the tabernacle services were at an end. (See Matthew 27:51 and Hebrews 9:1-12.)

If the phrase "forever in your generations" means until the death of Christ in one verse, then that same phrase means the same in the other verses. In other words, the candlestick would have significance and use in the tabernacle until the death of Christ, and the Feast Days also would last only until the death of Christ. Both were commanded to last "forever in your generations."

It is of interest to note that the word *generation*, as used in this verse, is translated from a Hebrew word which means: "A revolution of time, i.e. an age or generation." It was a *revolution of time* from the time of the founding of Israel through Jacob until these people were scattered and their freedom and privilege of worship and governing themselves was denied them.

It is to be further noted that it was the people of *Israel* who were delivered from Egypt, and these feasts (Passover and unleavened bread) were to be observed by them in commemoration of *their* deliverance from this land of oppression.

Now no ancestors of the Chinese, Japanese, Negroes, or Indians were delivered from Egypt, and all these people are now privileged to become Christians—children of God through

accepting Christ as their Saviour and Passover. How could these people, who embrace the plan of salvation, celebrate their (or their forefather's) deliverance from Egypt by observing in some special way the days which were once set aside for celebrating these feasts? It is impossible.

But now we are all one in Christ Jesus. God makes no difference now. See 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28; and Colossians 3:11. All are to worship God alike. It is not for some, who may believe they are the literal descendants of one of the original 12 tribes of Israel, to celebrate these feast days and others not to. Rather, all believers now celebrate their deliverance from sin (through Christ) by commemorating His death in partaking of the emblems of His broken body and shed blood at the annual Lord's Supper service.

Does This Also End the Sabbath?

What about the argument that the points brought out to show that the Feast Days ended with the crucifixion of Christ would also show that the seventh day Sabbath ended at the same time? Does not Exodus 31:13 say that the Sabbath was to be observed by Israel "throughout your generations?" If this means only until the death of Christ, does not this teach that the Sabbath also ended with the death of Christ?

The answer is that it SURELY WOULD TEACH JUST THIS IF THAT WAS ALL

THAT WAS SAID ABOUT THE KEEP-
ING OF THE SABBATH! But that is just
a PART of what is said. Israel was to keep
the Sabbath all during the time that they were
to keep the feast days, throughout their gen-
erations. But whereas that is ALL that is said
about the time of keeping the feast days, no-
tice what is FURTHER said about the time
of the keeping of the Sabbath:

*Wherefore the children of Israel shall
keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath
through their generations, for a PER-
PETUAL COVENANT (Exodus 31:16
capitals added).*

The generations of literal Israel's national
existence came to an end. But the perpetual
covenant goes on for perpetual means "never
ending." The Sabbath was given for the people
of God before the time of Israel—even at cre-
ation. The Sabbath was given to Israel as the
people of God of their time. The Sabbath is
given now to all who through Christ are chil-
dren of Abraham, spiritual Israel. Thus the per-
petual covenant continues. But no such thing
was said about the keeping of the feast days.
It is inconsistent to teach that the feast
days and the seventh-day Sabbath must be
considered alike, and stand or fall together.

The Feast Days Kept With Burnt Sacrifices

In our study of the Bible we find that ALL
of the special feasts and annual sabbaths
were kept with special burnt offerings com-
manded especially for those days. In the cere-

monial system under the Law of Moses there
was a "daily sacrifice" offered morning and
evening of every day. Note the following:

*Now this is that which thou shalt
offer upon the altar; two lambs of the
first year day by day continually. The
one lamb thou shalt offer in the morn-
ing; and the other lamb thou shalt offer
at even. This shall be a continual burnt
offering throughout your generations...*
(Exodus 29:38, 39, 42).

These sacrifices were made morning and
evening every day of the year. But on the
annual feast days, in addition to the regular
sacrifices, many other special sacrifices were
made as part of the observance of the day.
All of these are listed in connection with the
descriptions of the feasts in Leviticus 23. And
then, to sum it all up and to show the special
importance of the sacrifices as essential to
the keeping of the feast days, we find this
verse:

*These are the feasts of the Lord, which
ye shall proclaim to be holy convoca-
tions, TO OFFER AN OFFERING
MADE BY FIRE UNTO THE LORD,
A BURNT OFFERING, AND A MEAT
OFFERING, A SACRIFICE, AND
DRINK OFFERINGS, every thing upon
his day (Leviticus 23:37; capitals added
for emphasis).*

Surely this verse shows that the sacrifices
and offerings were an essential part of the
observance of the annual feast days.

Additional Contrasts Between the Feast Days and the Sabbath

We have previously pointed out that the ending of the feast days does not also end the seventh-day Sabbath. Now we wish to point out other contrasts between the teachings concerning the Sabbath and those concerning the annual feast days.

First: The seventh-day Sabbath was given at Creation, and it was, is, and will continue to be a memorial of creation. Thus in its origin it had no connection with any special nation or group of people, but rather is of equal significance to all the people of the world. But the feast days were never mentioned until given through Moses to Israel. Besides, the seventh-day Sabbath was instituted before animal sacrificing was required.

Second: The seventh-day Sabbath was commanded in one of the Ten Commandments, spoken by the voice of God directly to the people (Deut. 5:5-14). But all of the feast days were given by God only through Moses. Here we find the essence of the teaching of the Two Laws—one law given by God directly to the people; the other given by God through Moses. To Israel of old it was declared that they were to "*observe to do according to all that I [God] have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them*" (2 Kings 21:8). Christians today are called upon to keep "*the commandments of GOD and the faith of Jesus*" (Revelation 14:12).

Third: the seventh-day Sabbath was among the commands God enscribed on the tables of stone. But the feast days were recorded in the Book of the Law of Moses.

Fourth: In the original, first, command and description of the feast days, (with the exception of the feast of unleavened bread, Exodus 12:15-20) the sacrifices are commanded as a part of their observance. The sacrifices were not something which were added later to be done on those days, but were a part of the *original command*. In contrast, in the original command for the keeping of the Sabbath, nothing is said about sacrifices, and in other verses where the Sabbath is especially urged to be kept, nothing is said about offerings or sacrifices. Note the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 and the admonition to keep the Sabbath in Isaiah 58:13, 14.

When the sacrificial system with the tabernacle, and later the temple, was in effect, there were sacrifices on the seventh-day Sabbath. There was the regular morning and evening sacrifice, and there was also a special sacrifice to be made on the Sabbath. (See Numbers 28:3-6 and 9, 10.) These offerings were made only at the tabernacle or temple as a part of the Sabbath observance there. But the people also carried out the full observance of the Sabbath everywhere throughout the land. They did not have to go to the place where the tabernacle or temple was to observe the 7th day Sabbath. This brings us to another very important fact about the feast days.

Feast Days Could Be Kept Only At the Appointed Place

The annual feast days were tied so closely with the sacrificial system that they could be observed or kept *only* at the place of the tabernacle or temple. Three times during the year all the men were to gather to take part in the keeping of the feasts. The first time they were to gather was for the Passover and feast of unleavened bread. The second time was for Pentecost, and the third time was for the feast of Tabernacles. This instruction was given very early in the Law of Moses, for we find it in Exodus 23:14-17 and again in Exodus 34:23. But the most complete instruction for the keeping of the feasts at the appointed place is found in Deuteronomy 16. Remember that the book of Deuteronomy is the summary of all the laws and instructions to Israel, given by God through Moses before Israel entered the promised land.

Only Three Feasts

Some writers in their work of adding to the Scriptures describe *seven* annual feasts, but if we abide by the Word of God, we find just *three*. Notice how they are described in Deuteronomy 16.

One: The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread are counted as *ONE FEAST*. Read Deuteronomy 16:1-8 and you will see that no distinction is made between Passover and the following days of unleavened bread. This helps us to understand why these are spoken

of as being one observance in Mark 14:1 and Luke 22:1, 7.

Two: The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost—Deut. 16:9-12.

Three: The Feast of Tabernacles—Deut. 16:13-15.

After the description of these feasts in the verses given, we find this summary:

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty (Deut. 16:16).

Two Other Observances

The two other annual observances, which included annual sabbaths, were the time of blowing of trumpets on the first day of the seventh month and the Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month. These were special observances at the place of the tabernacle or temple. The men of Israel were not asked to travel from their homes in the various parts of Canaan to be present for these observances. Thus only the people who were near the tabernacle heard the trumpets on the first day of the seventh month. These trumpets were blown "over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices" (Numbers 10:10), and the sacrifices were offered only at the tabernacle or temple. But the people throughout the land kept the first day of the seventh month as a

to make war over this, but those who had built this new altar explained that it was not for sacrifice. There was only one altar of the Lord for sacrifice as is shown in Joshua 22:19. And since the keeping of the feast days required sacrifices, they could be kept only at the place of sacrifice, or at that time, at Shiloh.

It might seem that it would be that, at the time of the feasts, the sacrifices would be made at the place of the tabernacle or temple, but the people all over the land could keep the feasts where they lived. This was the case with the 7th-day Sabbath. Sacrifices were offered on the 7th-day Sabbath at the tabernacle, but sacrificing was not a required part of the observance of the time. No one would have been guilty of Sabbath-breaking had they not offered sacrifices on that day. The essential thing for Sabbath observance is simply to refrain from common daily work as is clearly shown in the fourth commandment. But the sacrifices were an essential part of the observances of the feasts as is clearly shown in Leviticus 23, and especially in verse 37 of that chapter.

Many Bible verses show clearly that those who took part in the observance of the annual feasts went to the place of the tabernacle or temple for that observance. The first such mention is in Judges 21. We read:

Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly . . . (Judges 21:19).

Study carefully Deuteronomy 16, and it can

sabbath in which they did no work. This was not keeping it as a feast. The other observance was the Day of Atone-ment. This was a service done for the people, and there was no command for them to assemble at the place of the tabernacle. However, again, they kept that day as an annual sabbath wherever they lived. But this did not mean they kept it as a feast.

The Place of the Three Feasts

Now let us continue the study of the special place at which the three annual feasts could be observed and where they were always observed while they were in effect. From Deuteronomy 16:16 we have learned that the three feasts were to be kept *at the place which God would choose*—after Israel arrived in Canaan. Under the leadership of Joshua, Israel drove out the Canaanites or brought them under their rule. When this had been largely accomplished, we read:

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them (Joshua 18:1).

At the entrance of the tabernacle was the altar of burnt offering. This was the only altar in all Israel on which burnt sacrifices were to be offered. When the tribes of Israel who lived east of the Jordan River built an altar for a monument, they were accused of building another altar for sacrifice. The tribes who lived on the west side of Jordan were about

knowledge of the blessings of the harvest (*Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, page 410).

All descriptions in the Bible of the keeping of the Passover and the other feasts show them being kept where the Tabernacle or, later, where the Temple was located.

One of the most interesting passages showing the keeping of the Passover at Jerusalem is the record of the custom of the parents of Jesus. We read:

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem... (Luke 2: 41-43).

Joseph and Mary, with Jesus, lived at Nazareth, a town in Galilee in the north part of Palestine. It was several days journey to Jerusalem. But, in order to take part in the Passover, Joseph and Mary made the journey each year. The Passover ceremony--the eating of the Passover, took just one evening, but they evidently stayed for the feast of unleavened bread--all considered a part of the same feast as the Passover. Note that it says, "when they had fulfilled the days...."

Again we read concerning the Passover:

And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover to purify themselves. Then sought they

33

be clearly seen that the place was important in the keeping of the feasts. Passover lambs could not be killed anywhere in the world except at the tabernacle or temple:

Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee: but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover... And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the mornings, and go unto thy tents (Deut. 16:5-7).

Thus it is seen that even the Passover was given to be observed only if the people went to the place of the tabernacle or temple, which was first at Shiloh and later at Jerusalem. It is true that in the time since the destruction of the temple, the Jews have observed the Passover and other feasts in the places where they have lived all over the world. This, however, is not according to the Bible teaching. Some even continued to offer animal sacrifices, and this is still being done even today.

The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* says this concerning the feasts:

"The Three Pilgrimage Festivals (Shelosh, Regalim), Passover, Shaboth (Pentecost) and Sukkoth (Tabernacles). All three are harvest festivals and undoubtedly originated after Israel had entered Palestine. On these days pilgrimages were made to the sacred places and sacrificial gifts were made in grateful ac-

32

for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? On the next day much people that were come to the feast... (John 11:55, 56; 12:12).

Thus, again, we see that the Passover was called a "feast" and that it was at Jerusalem. That the same is true of the Feast of Tabernacles is shown in John 7. We read:

Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. Then Jesus said unto them... Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast... But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast... Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught (John 7:2, 6, 8, 10, 14 (parts of the verses)).

Yes, the Feast of Tabernacles, with its many animal sacrifices, was held at the place where the temple was located, which, in the time of Jesus, was at Jerusalem. In order to take part in the observance, people had to go to Jerusalem. The apparent reason there were people in Jerusalem from so many nations, as recorded in Acts 2:5-11, is because they had come there for the feast of Pentecost.

No Bible Evidence That The Church Kept the Feasts

In all the record of the early Christian church, from Acts to Revelation, there are only seven references to the feast days, and in not one of these is there any mention of

them being kept by Christians. Let us study them one by one.

(1) *And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Their were the days of unleavened bread.)*

(2) *And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison... intending after Easter (Passover) to bring him forth to the people (Acts 12:3, 4).*

The book of Acts was written by Luke and it records events to the time near the death of Paul. Thus the record of Acts 12 was written many years after the events described had taken place. Herod killed James, the brother of John. He then put Peter into prison. But it was at the time when the Jews were celebrating the Passover, and so Herod decided not to bring Peter out for trial until after "Easter." The margin shows that the word here translated "Easter" means Passover. All the revisions translate it Passover. Note the apparent discrepancy in referring to the "days of unleavened bread" as coming before Passover. The same apparent discrepancy is found in Luke 22:7. There, however, is no error as these verses simply show that the Passover and days, or feast, of unleavened bread were all regarded as the same feast. The fact that Herod waited until after the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to bring Peter out before the Jews, does not in any way teach that the Christians kept the Passover or Feast of Unleavened Bread. Luke, in writing of this

event, referred to what Herod and the Jews did. Because the Jews were busy observing the feast, Herod postponed the trial of Peter. That is all we can properly get from this passage.

(3) *But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus (Acts 18:21).*

This surely sounds like Paul planned to take part in one of the feasts. In our study of this verse, we first looked up the Greek word which is here translated "keep." *Strongs's Concordance* says the word is *poieo*, and gives a whole paragraph of possible meanings in English. Some of the meanings are: to make or do; to gain, to secure and to spend. Since Paul never in any way taught that Christians should keep any of the feasts, it seems evident that he just wanted to be at Jerusalem when the great crowds of Jews would be there for the feast. And note also that this is another proof that the feasts were kept only at Jerusalem. The feast did not come or take place at Antioch, or Caesarea, but only at Jerusalem. And if Paul "kept" the feast when he got to Jerusalem, it must not have been considered important, for it is not mentioned. Verse 22 tells what he did when he got to Jerusalem:

And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church [at Jerusalem], he went down to Antioch (Acts 18:22).

All that Paul did at Jerusalem was to salute, or greet, the church, and nothing is said about that church having any special meeting or holy convocation in keeping a feast.

We also note that Paul did not advocate that anyone else should go to Jerusalem to "keep the feast." If it was something to be observed by Christians it would have been important that as many as possible of the members of the church should go to observe it. But nothing is said about the church going to Jerusalem, or having any observance where they were. And so it is evident that Paul, as a minister, only wanted to go to preach to the Jews who would be congregated in Jerusalem at that time.

In passing we may also note that the entire phrase of verse 21 referring to Paul's desire to keep a feast, does not appear in many of the ancient manuscripts. It does not appear in the American Standard Version, or in the 20th Century New Testament, or in most other revisions and modern versions.

(4) *And he sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread...* (Acts 20:6).

A careful reading of the preceding and following verses will reveal absolutely nothing about any sacred observance of these days by the church. Paul was a Jew and had practiced the Jewish religion most of his life. It was altogether natural for him to refer to various times of the year in terms of observances which were well known to the people. We who do not celebrate Christmas may

often refer to events as coming before or after Christmas, but such reference does not mean that we now observe the day.

(5) For Paul determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

Nothing is here said of why Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem on that day. The Jews were, of course, still observing it in Jerusalem as they had in the past, and there would be people there from many countries as there were the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the church. And so he may have had in mind the added opportunity to witness for Christ.

We do not even know if Paul got to Jerusalem for that day, but if he did, there is no reference of his taking part in any sacred observances of the day. It simply says, "And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly" (Acts 21:17). And they were concerned, because the Jews knew that Paul taught people to "forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs" (Acts 21:21). This shows that what Paul actually taught was that the people were NOT to keep the rites and ceremonies of the Law of Moses and surely this would include the feasts, which as we have shown, could be kept only with animal sacrifices.

(6) Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous,

38

because the fast was now already past... (Acts 27:9).

Both marginal references and also many commentaries say the "fast" here mentioned was the Day of Atonement. This was in September about the time of the autumn equinox when storms were likely to occur on the sea. It was a common saying among the Jews that it was dangerous to sail "after the fast." Paul describes and discusses the voyage in the terms used by the sailors as may be noted in verse 14. Thus he simply referred to the time of year in the way it was commonly known, and this has no possible reference to any keeping of the day of Atonement by Christians. As previously noted, the ninth and tenth chapters of the book of Hebrews show clearly that the ceremonies and observance of the day of atonement had ended.

(7) But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8).

In the next verse Paul says he will tarry that long because there is a great opportunity to preach the gospel. Pentecost was properly celebrated at Jerusalem as we have previously noted but Paul was here not planning to go to Jerusalem for that feast. In fact, nothing is said of any observance of this or any other of the feasts by the Christians in any of the churches. This is just another reference to a time of year by a familiar term.

Thus we have examined all the references to the feast days in connection with the work of the apostle Paul. In fact, these are the

39

only references to the feast days found in the New Testament after the Gospels. And we have found absolutely no teaching or example for keeping any of the annual feast days which God gave to Israel through Moses.

Feasts of the Jews

The feasts which God gave through Moses were for all the people of God at that time—Jews, and Gentile converts. The laws covering these things were still in effect during the ministry of Jesus. But it is evident that a special effort is made in the Bible to avoid confusion by referring to the feasts as being "Jewish." Note the following:

And the Jews' Passover was at hand
(John 2:13).

After this there was a feast of the Jews
(John 5:1).

And the passover, a feast of the Jews,
was nigh (John 6:4).

Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was
at hand (John 7:2).

Such references show clearly that the feast days were not to be a part of the Christian message but were to be considered a part of Judaism.

What Feast Are We to Keep?

In I Corinthians 5:8 we have these words:

Therefore let us keep the feast...

What feast is the apostle Paul here directing that we as Christians should keep? The only

way to find out is to study carefully the verses in which this phrase is found. The instruction begins with verse 6. Paul was reproving the church because it had allowed fornication to occur. He said they had been proud rather than sad because of this situation. And then he gives a principle to consider:

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Corinthians 5:6-8).

The sin which was in the church was compared to leaven. The church was told to purge out this sin and be a clean church. Christ is now our Passover (lamb) which has been sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us make sure we have gotten rid of all malice and wickedness before we "keep the feast."

Where do we find a similar teaching to prepare for a Christian observance? It is in this same book, I Corinthians 11:28-30. Here the apostle declares that we should *examine ourselves* before taking the *Lord's Supper*.

Christ is our Passover. We eat our Passover Lamb by taking the bread and fruit of the vine, representing the body and blood of Christ, at the Lord's Supper. Some have insisted that the "feast" cannot mean the Passover

but must refer to the "feast of unleavened bread." However, in our study we have observed that the Passover is called a "feast" in many places in the Bible and that the entire observance of Passover and days of unleavened bread are often referred to as one feast. Christ gave us the Lord's Supper as the memorial of the Christians' deliverance from sin by His sacrifice for us. This is clearly shown in the record in the Gospels of the giving of the Lord's Supper and also in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. This is the only *feast* which Christians are to keep as an annual observance. It is to be kept with "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" as well as with the actual unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (grape juice).

The Value of Types and Illustrations

There are many types and illustrations in the Bible, and the study of these is most interesting and profitable. The sacrificial lamb was always a type of Christ, the Lamb of God. The near-sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham was a type of the sacrifice of Christ. The ark which Noah built is a type of our salvation. The journey of Israel in the wilderness is a type of our Christian journey. Such types, or illustrations, are good, and they are explained in the Bible. One such explanation is found in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. See the margin for the word *examples* in verse 11. These things were types. To study them is for our interest and profit.

But there is a great danger in overdoing

the establishment of types and adding to the Scriptures by making many things types which have no such significance. This is what some have done with the feast days. They have worked out their own system and explanation of many types which they declare they find in the feast days. Then, having explained these types which they have originated, they proceed to use their own explanations as though they were Bible teachings, and they use them to try to prove that the feast days are to be kept by Christians today. Such "proof" is merely building on sand.

In our study of the Bible in this treatise we have found the purpose of each feast clearly given in the Bible. The main feasts were memorials by which the descendants of the Israelites were to remember God's dealings with their fathers in connection with the deliverance from Egypt and their prosperity in the promised land. They were to be kept "forever in their generations." The special work of the generations of Israel came to an end with the coming of the Messiah, Christ, and His sacrificial death on the cross. We will do well if we do what Christ has taught us to do—keep the commandments of God, including the Sabbath, baptism, foot washing, and the Lord's Supper, abstain from the unclean, and live a holy, Christian life.

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For further study of the Bible on the plan of salvation, see the listing of tracts on the two following pages.