

Purpose of the Festivals (side 1) 770311 Pas AM BS

It is defined as the purpose for the festivals, which would not necessarily exclude principles applicable to the Sabbath as well.

We're not dealing with a question of meanings, which we usually go through at each of the holy days as they come along.

There will be special discussion in the succeeding two weeks, pretending to pass over days of unleavened bread.

And there, presumably, we'll be dealing more with our responsibility, the nature and the character of the festival, what we are expected to do.

This evening, we thought, after talking over the matter with Mr. Steve Martin and Church Administration, that we would divide it into three parts.

So I'll summarize these, and we will try to analyze and dwell on those things which seem important at this time of the year.

One we want to look at the purpose of the festivals, that is, to put it in other terms, why does the world keep Christmas and Easter? Then you can better understand, if you haven't really thought about it, why God asks you not to, but asks you to do something else.

Then we want to discuss a question which perhaps could be postponed, but since it involves the festival season, we should examine it too.

And that is, what is the Sabbath day in Leviticus 23, which precedes the day of the Wave Sheaf? In other words, which Sunday is involved this year since Passover falls on the seventh day of the week? Does the Wave Sheaf fall on the first day of unleavened bread, or does the Wave Sheaf fall outside of the days of unleavened bread? Then we should also examine a question which is certainly being renewed in the last two to three years, and that is the matter of whether, on the evening of the 14th of the first month, Jesus observed the Passover or something else, and whether, when we take of the symbols of unleavened bread and wine to represent the body and blood of Jesus Christ, are we in fact continuing the Passover under emblems for the New Testament Church, or are we commemorating something that Jesus instituted for the first time, and is the Passover something else altogether on the following night? We will try to take them in that order.

This will leave us sufficient time, I think, for all the important matters.

I'll let Mr. Barr start out since I pose a number of questions to him for the first part, and we'll each pick up the things that seem important as we go through each of these topics.

I'd like to talk in general about the purpose of the Holy Days, and just begin in a sort of a not a philosophical way, but in a more sort of a thoughtful, basic way of looking at the Holy Days.

This question I like to ask, and that is, why is God concerned with observing a day? Here's God, who lives forever, who's lived forever, his history goes way beyond our comprehension and understanding.

He is the eternal, the self-existing one, and yet he is concerned with a day.

Of course, a day in terms of our earthly existence is defined by, you know, that every time the earth begins to rotate on its axis, we have what we consider to be a day, and yet God says that out of a year, out of 365 days in a year, seven of those days are going to be Holy Days.

Why is God concerned with a day? Well, again, I think it's obvious that God is not subject to time.

Remember the scripture which says that a day is a thousand years to God, and a thousand years is a day, so, you know, it's just sort of hard for me to understand or even comprehend that statement.

I was waiting for the light this afternoon.

It was a long light.

I think it was about two minutes.

I was thinking in terms of this scripture, a day is a thousand years and a thousand years is a day.

And I said to myself, what if I had to wait here a thousand years, you know, to wait for the light change? Of course, I think it's very obvious that we, as human beings, are very limited and that man is subject to time, that man has to be aware of time, and for that reason is the reason why God is concerned with time.

Now, God created the Holy Days, which I think is the only natural conclusion, that is, he created for man.

And you know, it's just sort of interesting to think about that.

God created Holy Days for man, you know, for example, the subject of tithing.

We take ten percent out of our income and we give it to God, basically for the work of God.

That belongs to God.

But God also says there's time, certain implement of time that belongs to me, that we must give to God.

God says we stop on that particular period of time and then we begin to worship and we begin to reflect and begin to think upon the plan of God.

These days are special to God, and they must be special to us.

You know, brethren, I don't know whether we really understand that, how special these days are to God.

They are so special that they are constantly on the mind and in thinking of God.

Not the days themselves necessarily, but what they reflect in the plan which is involved in these days.

That God is more concerned with his plan than he is with our routine, cares and problems that we face every day.

You know, not that God is not concerned with your problems, but he's more concerned with his plan and the ultimate fulfillment of his plan.

And God designed these Holy Days around his plan, that someday he's going to have a family, a huge, giant family of individuals who have character and who are, I guess, a wide variety of individuals in his family.

The Holy Days sort of reflect the love of God for man, the love of God for mankind.

You remember the scripture that says, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever shall believe on him shall be saved.

And yet that expression there reflects the very beginning of the Holy Days season as we are about to enter into, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that he became our Passover.

And that's the beginning of the reflection of the love of God for mankind.

And so the Holy Days are sort of an act of love, in spite of what man has done, God loves mankind.

And God wants mankind to continue to understand and be remembered of his plan.

I have four children, and they're all pretty small ones.

And because of that, I help my wife from time to time to do some of the chores in the house, not as much as she would like me to do, but I do do it from time to time.

I found that I have to change diapers as well.

That's a stinky business of changing diapers, but it has to be done.

Someone has to do it, or else the whole house will smell.

But as I was changing diapers, I was thinking, how does this fit into the plan of God? This is a necessary chore and responsibility that most mothers have to do, and a few fathers have to do from time to time.

And yet, I know many wives would like to get away from that from time to time and get their minds and other things.

And I think there's a basic principle behind that, that God recognized that the human mind can be so involved in the routine things of life, the cares of life, the washing dishes, the working on the job, putting a nut on the screw, or a screw on the nut, whatever you do.

I don't know, I've never worked in an assembly line, but being concerned with the routine and mundane things of life, you totally forget the reason for life and why we are here.

And this, I think, is a very important aspect of the plan of God and the purpose of God.

If you notice in John 2 Peter 3 and verse 9, I don't want to take too much time, I think Dr. Hayd would like to comment on this particular area, but here in 2 Peter 3 and verse 9, and let's see, the apostle Peter wrote, The Lord has not slacked concerning his promise that some men have counted slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

You know, that particular scripture there simply refers to the love of God.

It refers to the love and the compassion that God has for mankind, and yet this is also reflected in the holy days, the days of Unleavened Bread, God wants man to change, God wants man to put out sin, to repent.

If you notice in 1 Corinthians 15, just want to show you that the holy days are an act, they are an act of love by God, in spite of the fact that most of mankind doesn't understand that love.

In 1 Corinthians 15, verse 23, beginning in verse 22, for as an atom all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order Christ the first fruits and after they that are Christ at his coming.

And then it talks about the end when he shall be delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Now this includes the day of Pentecost, as well as the Feast of Trumpets, as well as the day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles, all included in this verse 23, 24, a sort of a summary of what those days are.

I don't want to, we're not planning to go into those days in specific turns because I believe next week the days on Leavenbread will be reviewed and in the following week the Passover, the meaning of the Passover will be reviewed.

So I just want to show you that it is God's concern for mankind and his love for mankind.

You notice in 1 Timothy 2, verse 3, 1 Timothy 2, verse 3, Paul makes a statement here which I think is a beautiful statement beginning in verse 3, for it is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

And so ultimately the kingdom of God will be established and the last great day will be after then, and all men will be given a chance to hear the truth.

And God will set his hand to save mankind.

The plan of God begins with Christ, and it sort of includes all of mankind at the end.

And yet the purpose of the holy days is surrounded around man, it is meant for man.

Now I was thinking the other day that in Leviticus 23 you have a number of rituals, or should I say sacrifices, descriptions of various things that should be done during the holy days.

And of course there are those who feel that because there are so many references to sacrifices that the sacrifices are connected with the holy days, and that's erroneous thinking in fact even the Jews recognize that the sacrifices are not connected with the holy days.

And even today the Jews keep the holy days, but they don't sacrifice.

That's just a sidelight.

But is ritualism wrong? I mean is performing a ritualistic act a sin? There's been much talk recently that if you do anything that is a ritual, you almost get the indication that it's evil, it's rotten.

But you know the Passover is a ritual, the days of unleavened bread is a ritual, prayer, getting on your knees and praying to God is a form of ritual.

Anointing is a ritual.

And to me brethren that's not evil, that's good.

And God through certain observance, through certain practices, portrays a plan, a mankind, a basic understanding, the mankind of what he has in mind for man.

And really you know, I think the real test in our life, and I think this is a very important question for you to ask to yourself.

And that is, if there were no church services that is, and if there were no ministry, and that you were the only one, the only member of God's church left alive, would you continue to keep the holy days? Would you still continue to keep these special days which God has set apart to portray his plan? You know, I really wonder how many would continually keep the holy days.

I think we have an excellent example of that already of certain ones who have left us.

Some have completely, in fact I would say the majority that I know of in my limited experience, have completely forgotten the holy days, in fact have said that they're not even necessary to keep.

And yet when you understand what God has done, you find that they are absolutely necessary.

Well, I'm being a little philosophical right now.

God is a God of purpose, and I cannot conceive of God creating something that does not have purpose to it.

You know, God created food for mankind, He created animal life, that, of course, clean animals for human consumption, and it has purpose to it, it has meaning to it.

And yet when we come to the holy days, it seems like, well, that's meaningless, it didn't really mean anything, it was just some ritual that God had Israel to go through, and we today are liberated from that, we don't have to keep those days anymore.

This is a continual thing that I had heard in times past, I don't hear as much today as I heard about a year ago, or maybe two years ago.

But you know God had a purpose in designing the holy days, and I hope that we can understand that as we enter into the holy day season, especially with the Passover and the Days of Love and Bread.

So basically, that's all I would like to say on the subject of the purpose of the holy days, and I know Dr. Hay has some more to add to that.

We have normally defined it in terms of doctrine.

I would just quickly summarize it, because I think that we all have a general understanding, but sometimes there are side points we don't.

Mr. Armstrong has stated for many years, you've heard it from the rest of the ministry, I am sure, that the festivals of God were given to the church when the church was established to accomplish a work that no one was asked before to do at this level.

The Sabbath was established when God made man, because every individual needs it.

There are people, of course, who have forgotten it.

Now when it came to the patriarchs, there is reason to believe that God showed them certain things on certain days, which later they shall see anticipated time that God hallowed them.

But we have no evidence, clearly defined anywhere, that times that we would call annual in nature were set aside prior to the time the church was organized, and the first collective event that we have any knowledge of, in which the church participated, was the observation of the Passover.

The next collective event in which the church participated was the observation of a festival period called Unleavened Bread.

We could continue the story, but I think that from Exodus 12, you have already seen there the implication that when we have a collective body, there is the need of collective participation.

It is not enough that every one of us set up a box at a street corner near where we live and start to expound on the Bible or the message of the kingdom of God.

That is not the way it's done.

We learn from the festivals the importance of collective participation in commemorating events of the plan of God which have already occurred and commemorating in advance parts of the plan of God which have not yet occurred.

So the argument, of course, which we can dismiss rather readily merely because some things are a shadow, we shouldn't keep them as ridiculous, because that's all the more important.

If you'd bring up the argument, because it's already happened, you don't have to.

That might have a little more weight, but the reason they're given in the first place is to keep us in mind of things which have yet to occur.

The Sabbath, with respect to the thousand years, in contrast to the six thousand years of the labor of sin that men have been involved in under the government of the devil, not always knowing it, of course.

The annual occasions that bring to our attention events that have transpired and most certainly will.

Now in reality, in a sense, none of the festivals Passover included have truly been fulfilled in all their purpose.

If we take the Passover, we could say yes, the implications of the sacrifice of Christ, certain aspects that has occurred, that's complete.

The fact remains, however, that the sacrifice of Christ has yet to be applied to the overwhelming majority of the people of the world who live in sin and under the condemnation of sin who have never yet had forgiveness.

Christ died to make it possible, but it has not yet even been applied to the overwhelming majority in the world.

So there are still aspects of the Passover that have yet to see their ultimate fulfillment, and most certainly all the rest of the festivals.

And one of the reasons we are asked to keep them is to bring to our attention that which has not yet occurred.

We have said that there is no church anywhere, no group of people, no individual who have forgotten the festivals, having laid them aside, has any clear understanding of what is to transpire in the plan of God.

I don't have to go out into the world of the non-church of God or out into the pagan world, the world of confusion and secularism.

I could cite the history of the Church of God prior to the knowledge of the festivals being brought to the attention of the church forcefully in the 1930s.

That church, which was the Church of God in which some walked in white, but many were spiritually dead, observed only a Passover and no other festival, and they have no real understanding of the plan of God.

But there are many Jews who observe the first day of the seventh month, which we call the Feast of Trumpets, commonly called New Years, and many more so, probably, who strictly observe the day of atonement.

And it will be interesting that the first people whom God will save when Jesus Christ returns will be the tents of Judah.

We are not here referring to the church which is made immortal.

I'm talking about human beings.

The Christian world will not recognize Jesus when he comes.

As a whole, they will assume he is the Antichrist.

And of course, they are not observing either the Festival of Trumpets, which commemorates the return of Jesus Christ as well as the intervention of God in World Affairs, as we call the day of the Lord, but the day of atonement which brings to our attention the necessity of collective acknowledgement of guilt as distinct from the individual acknowledgement of guilt that is emphasized in the Passover.

When you look at Zechariah, the last three chapters, it is very interesting that the first people who are repentant and whom God saves are the house of Judah, the family of David, the city of Jerusalem, who have recognized the Messiah, who have, in fact, come to repentance.

The men, like the Jews today do, are part weeping and praying, fasting on the day of atonement, of course, and the women of part.

That's the Jewish custom, and it's right there in Zechariah 14 laid out that those people are going to come to that state, and the reason they are is the fact that they have recognized the meaning and the implication of the day of atonement insofar as it has been explained from the pulpit among them.

When people get away from these things, they forget them.

You can use all the arguments you wish with respect to Paul's statements in Romans 14 as statements in Galatians or Colossians.

The Bible is a whole and a unit, and before you use some obscure verse in Romans 14 or Galatians, which does not even mention holy days, new moons, and sabbaths, as Colossians do, before you forget the Bible as a unit, think about the fact, what the law itself says, into the law and to the prophets.

If they don't speak according to that, there is no light in them.

If Paul was trying to lay aside the holy days or the seventh day of the week as a sabbath, he would have been confronted with the same controversy that blew up when the question of circumcision occurred, and they had to have an entire church council.

It is unthinkable, as was presented well over a year ago in a very strong paper by Lester Grabey when the controversy rose in England.

He presented a paper to point out that if a council had to be called on the question of circumcision, which had nothing to do with one of the Ten Commandments, what do you think would have happened if the question of the seventh day sabbath had occurred? And the argument never developed anywhere in the New Testament.

It is unthinkable that the references to the first day of the week could be casually taken as knocking out one of the Ten Commandments.

The fundamental purpose is to keep us in the knowledge of something that no people has ever kept if they have laid aside the festivals.

Side by side with this is the unusual thing, of course, that the festivals are observed not only in a spiritual sense, but in a social sense.

This is very important because it is vital to our personalities and to our getting our minds on the big task and not the local church alone to celebrate these festivals together for our social good.

I have said when Mr. Armstrong was in the Bible study, and he certainly, I think, agreed at the time that I do not know of any contribution that he made in the early days of the work and the Church of God that was more important than the recognition of the force of the festivals of God in the New Testament Church.

Different people have kept the Sabbath, but not the annual festivals.

Other people can read and know something of the nature of man, the doctrine of hell, and you name all the other peripheral things.

The one thing that has held the Church together that has created a social environment for our own spiritual and social, and if you please, marital and family well-being, is what we have through the festivals.

And although we might not see these directly, we learn some of these things by experience.

So it is critically important to realize that we have a responsibility toward one another on these occasions as they come for our own development as personalities, our own understanding of doctrine, and now we will introduce a third matter.

The festivals were given for two reasons beside that are opposites.

One for the unity of the Church, and the other for the stumbling blocks of those who want to stumble at unity.

Let's take a look for the moment.

The question of the festivals separated the Church of God with headquarters in Eugene, Oregon, from the rest of the Church of God, finally in 1938.

The festivals became a test as to whether you would stumble or whether you would listen to the one whom God was choosing then and training, then on a local scale by comparison, to accomplish the work of God.

The reason that Mr. Herbert Armstrong and the whole Eugene Church and the other congregations by 1938, the reason these were separated, and if you please, disfellowshipped by the Church of God's seventh day with whom the Churches in Oregon had been cooperating, was not because of the

gospel, not because of the Sabbath, not because of baptism, not because of unclean meats, and you name the rest.

One fundamental reason, not even the doctrine of our national identity, it was the hostility that developed over the question of the festivals.

It was a test, if you please, of obedience, not in terms of the individual as the Sabbath is.

It was a test of obedience for the whole body of the Church.

And God made a decision, and that decision was, of course, that those who did not open their minds to an understanding which was being made plain no longer were used.

It is a very sad situation.

The Churches of God, for many years in Mexico, before our work was there, observed the festivals in contradiction to the custom of the Churches of God's seventh day in the United States.

It was not until, if my memory serves me correctly, the 1950s that this was terminated.

Interestingly, it was only after that Church body made its decision that the work of God began to really go forth in Mexico.

You can think these things through.

The Churches of God throughout history have had questions on which day is the Passover.

This was, of course, not a major issue with the New Testament time.

It was only a minor issue later.

It became a much more important issue in the Church of God's seventh day in the last century as a result of the impact of the Jewish community in our western civilization, and people wanted to know, trying to get back to the Passover, how it should be done.

And it is a growing question again today.

There is no doubt that this was an issue that divided fellowship in the New Testament period of time in the days of Josephus and before.

If we read the accounts in the Gospel, there can be no doubt that it did divide with respect to the Passover, the people.

And I will show you from the New Testament that whatever your arguments from the old and Mr. Barber will do the same thing, whatever your arguments from an obscure or an incomplete expression in the old, there can be no doubt as to the teaching of the law when you see the example of the New Testament.

But Pentecost as well.

We know the Jewish community was divided.

This is historically absolutely stated, whereas with the Passover it is not.

You have to go to the New Testament.

It would appear that the Jewish community had as a whole given up the custom of Jesus with respect to the Passover much earlier, whereas the custom of Pentecost was an argument that continued all the way till about the middle of the 60s A.D.

There were those who kept it on a day of the week and those who kept it on a calendar day of the month, generally speaking.

There were those who measured it from an annual and the others from a weekly Sabbath.

The fellowship became an issue without a question.

And this brings us ultimately to the matter that when festivals are given, there is a necessity the question of church government, the question of the maintenance of unity.

Whether you will, apart from the issue of conscience, not seek to divide the church, but if necessary seek to persuade the leaders who are held responsible for making decisions of our collective conduct.

I did not say that you must be persuaded in conscience merely by the dictates of some other individual.

I have never said when the church imposed a decision on makeup that women had to agree in conscience with what they might not have agreed with, that they are required in such a period of time to conform to a decision irrespective of their conscience, though they should seek to educate it according to the biblical account.

The same way with respect to Passover or Pentecost, or how you think the days of unleavened bread should be kept, there are certain aspects which have been publicly decided.

And we are asked to collectively participate, whether in conscience you wholly agree or not.

And you learn not to divide yourself, so the festivals then have quite a purpose in teaching us something about the unity and the issue of stumbling blocks in the church and the recognition of the government of God in the church.

It also means that they place upon you a responsibility to come up with persuasive arguments if there are any questions that seem not to be clarified clearly by the church.

We know that individuals came to see an error, or for that matter, two errors with respect to Pentecost, some more than a year and a half ago, and instead of directly addressing the issue as it should have been.

The issue was spread abroad behind the back of Mr. Herbert Armstrong under the premise that he doesn't listen.

Now if he doesn't listen, there's one answer, you knock harder, you make the argument more persuasive.

That's what people ought to have done.

Now when the decision was made, and I heard Mr. Armstrong's telephone call from Tokyo, when the decision was made, it was before individuals left.

They did not decide to leave because we made no correct decision, we made the decision before they even acted to leave as a whole, which showed, of course, what their real attitude was.

It was an issue of obedience.

They only thought it was a historical issue.

You know, it doesn't mean a thing if you think historically that the church was wrong, that the evidence historically was something else.

It comes to be a matter of obedience.

So the purpose of the Holy Days are rather broad in terms of the impact they have.

And people who drift away, who decide to do their own thing, who do not appeal to the church to consider anything, and I appreciate the fact that some have properly appealed and have presented material on one or more matters as to whether there are things we could improve in the custom of the Passover and who should participate in foot washing and the rest.

We haven't had a chance to address all of them.

In many cases it may not be critical, it is a matter of example, not law, but it's good to look at it.

It is important that individuals who are persuaded differently, however, make their arguments so clear that there is no question.

And the responsibility then becomes very clear.

If the church is wrong, the church must make a right decision, or it departs from God's light, and soon will depart from his care.

And if the individual happens to have gotten hooked on an idea that is not sound, then it becomes important for the individual to get unhooked from his idea.

God sometimes allows errors to be snares.

Thus the church had erred with respect to two matters on Pentecost, which does not prove that the church has erred in all matters pertaining to the Passover.

We will try to get to each one.

Now I think we should examine briefly the question of the two decisions of which the first I will only state and go no further, and we'll look at the second decision on Pentecost, which was made shortly after in 1974.

The first decision pertained to the proper translation in Leviticus chapter 23 of the word from, from the moral, from the day.

The shall it be rendered in that manner and understood as the church had, or should it be reexamined, which it was, and ought to be translated with an emphasis on the word on, or counting beginning on.

This was clear, and only a very, very minute number of individuals sought to lay aside the clear implications of the proper translation, which made for conformity with all the rest of the verses.

But the real question, which was apparently overlooked, and some have brought it up this year and will try to lay it aside hurriedly, they have overlooked perhaps in the discussion pertaining to whether it was Sunday or some other day, they overlooked which Sunday.

Now the issue that is important is that we come to recognize the meaning of the word Sabbath with respect to the moral after that day.

Let's turn to the book of Leviticus chapter 23.

Leviticus 23.

We'll just quickly note that some things are not always stated clearly.

You shall count unto you, beginning with, on, the moral, after the Sabbath.

Our emphasis will be on Sabbath, which Sabbath is referred to.

Now when Mr. Herbert Armstrong examined this question, he came to the same conclusion that the Sadducees came to long after the days of Moses, which conclusion was not correct.

I'm looking for my watch here, I put it in the other pocket, and I want to be sure, since there's no clock, that we know where we are in terms of time.

Armstrong came to the conclusion, since it doesn't say which Sabbath he was focusing in on that, because prior to around 1936, he and Mrs. Herbert Armstrong at the time just followed the Jewish practice, how else would they have guessed anything, of observing Pentecost and the same day the Jewish communities as a whole do today, and that is on the 6th of