

“REGARDING A FESTIVAL OR A NEW MOON OR SABBATHS”

INTRODUCTION

A. Colossians 2:16-17

Because the Old Testament merely prefigured Christ, it lacks permanent substance. The festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths foreshadowed the New Testament in Christ, but are not the basis on which anyone now living should be judged.

B. Romans 15:4

Because the Scripture of the Old Covenant is still relevant for learning, we intend herein to learn what we can of the ancient feasts and holy days.

I. “A FESTIVAL”

A. “Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year”

1. Exodus 23:14-17; 34:22-24; Deuteronomy 16:16

In the Law of Moses, God required the men of Israel to appear before Him thrice per year for specific feasts, the names of which vary in different texts.

2. “Passover” or “The Feast of Unleavened Bread”

a. Leviticus 23:5-6; Deuteronomy 16:1-3

“Passover” was established when the tenth plague befell Egypt (Exodus 12:1-28). The death of the firstborn would afflict the Egyptians, but not the Israelites who smeared the blood of their sacrificial lambs on their doorframes. When Jehovah came through the land, He would see the blood and “pass over”, sparing the Israelites the anguish of their oppressors. Immediately following this great event, the Israelites fled Egypt in a mass exodus into the wilderness. Needing to move in haste, they would have no time for their bread to rise, so their

provisions would be unleavened. Accordingly, the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” accompanied the annual observance of Passover, which took place on the 14th day of Abib, their first month of the year.

b. 1st Corinthians 5:7-8

Now, “Christ” is “our Passover” and we need to be free of the leaven that is “malice and wickedness”.

3. “The Day of the Firstfruits” or “The Feast of Harvest” or “The Feast of Weeks” or “Pentecost”

a. Numbers 28:26-31

“Firstfruits” were offered to God at the “The Feast of Harvest” (Exodus 23:16), a term used interchangeably with “the Feast of Weeks” (Deuteronomy 16:10), which occurred seven weeks after Passover (Deuteronomy 16:9), or a count of “fifty days” (Leviticus 23:16), which is the meaning of the Greek term “Pentecost” (Acts 2:1).

b. James 1:18

In the New Testament, Christians are the “firstfruits”, meaning we are an offering to God.

4. “The Feast of Ingathering” or “The Feast of Tabernacles”

a. Leviticus 23:33-44

This event was known by two interchangeable names: the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16_b) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:16). At “ingathering”, on the 15th day of the 7th month, when the final yield of produce would be offered to God, the people of Israel would dwell in tabernacles, also called booths, to remind them of their temporary dwellings during their pilgrimage from Egypt to Canaan.

b. 2nd Corinthians 5:1-8

The body in which we dwell earthside is a mere tent, a tabernacle, and it is not meant to be a permanent home.

B. Other Holy Days Commanded by Moses

1. “A Day of Blowing the Trumpets”

a. *Leviticus 23:23-25; Numbers 29:1-6*

On the 1st day of the 7th month, which was the month Ethanim (*1st Kings 8:2*), the Levites were to blow trumpets. No reason was indicated for this, but it did mark the beginning of a month that also contained the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, so it was a rather eventful time of the year.

b. *1st Thessalonians 4:16-17*

We eagerly await the trumpet sound!

2. “The Day of Atonement”

a. *Leviticus 23:26-32; 16:20-22, 29-30*

On the 10th day of the 7th month, called Ethanim (*1st Kings 8:2*), was the day of Atonement, when the priests were to cleanse everyone, including themselves, of sin.

b. *Hebrews 9:6-28*

Unlike the priests who had to offer sacrifices for their own atonement before the people could receive the same, the sinless Christ offered Himself, fulfilling what was “symbolic” with *“the greater and more perfect”*.

C. Exilic & Post-Exilic Holy Days

1. “Purim”

a. *Esther 4:14; 9:18-28*

A Jewess named Esther became queen in the Persian Empire while a villain named Haman intended to annihilate the Jewish race. Genocide was averted, however, and the enemies of Israel were put to the sword. The Jews under Queen Esther and her

relative Mordecai declared a holiday to celebrate their deliverance and victory on the 14th and 15th days of Adar, the twelfth month, calling the occasion “Purim” after “pur”, the lot cast by Haman in his original plot.

b. Colossians 1:13

God still provides deliverance: from darkness into His kingdom.

c. John 16:20-22

Jesus turns sorrow into joy.

2. “The Feast of Dedication” or Chanukkah/Hanukkah

a. John 10:22-23

By His presence during “*the feast of Dedication*” Jesus tacitly approved its. Had He objected, He knew how to cleanse a temple (John 2:15). Dedication, which is what Chanukkah means, is mentioned in Scripture in this passage alone.

b. 1st Maccabees 4:36-59; 2nd Maccabees 10:1-8

These uninspired texts inform the reader that, after the Greek army defiled the temple, the Jews purified and dedicated it. They then determined to celebrate the event every year on the 25th of Chislev.

c. Daniel 8:11, 21; Zechariah 9:11-14

Daniel foretold the desecration of the sanctuary by the Greeks and Zechariah foretold that armed resistance by Jewish forces would succeed.

d. 2nd Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22-24

Dedication, that is: renewal, is a major theme of the New Testament.

II. “NEW MOON”

A. Psalm 81:3-4; Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15

The beginning of the month, or the change of the moon, was a time of trumpets and sacrifices.

B. James 4:13-17; Ephesians 5:15-16

Being aware of time's passage is relevant to all who intend to do good.

III. "SABBATH" & "JUBILEE"

A. Leviticus 23:3; 25:4; 25:8-17

The seventh day of every week, the seventh year, and the fiftieth year – which was called Jubilee, were all times of rest. Rest is what "*Sabbath*" means.

B. Nehemiah 9:14

Although Jehovah rested on the seventh day following creation (**Genesis 3:1-3**), it was not until Moses that the Sabbath was ever imposed upon man.

C. Hebrews 4:1-10

In the New Testament, rest yet "*remains*", not having been received. It is promised in the hereafter for those obedient to God.

CONCLUSION

A. Hebrews 10:1-4

By this study of Old Testament festivals and holidays, we see how inadequate that Covenant was, providing merely "*a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image*".

1. Christ is the Passover whose blood spares us from the plague of death.
2. We Christians are the firstfruits of God's harvest.
3. Whereas Israel tabernacled in the wilderness 40 years before reaching the Land of Promise, we see this whole earthbound life as a sojourn until heaven.
4. They had a yearly day of trumpets and we look forward to the last trumpet.

5. They needed priests to atone for themselves and then for the people, but we have the atonement of Christ once for all.
6. The Jewish diaspora slew their enemies throughout 127 provinces of the Persian empire to turn sorrow in gladness, and all we need is Christ and the hope of heaven.
7. They rededicated their temple after it was defiled by outsiders; we rededicate ourselves because we have let sin defile our own bodies.
8. The New Moon marked time's passing, but we must redeem time with good deeds.
9. Whereas they took rest every seventh day, every seventh year, and every seven seventh year, we await the rest of heaven.

B. Acts 13:38-39

In Christ is the justification that Moses' Law lacked.