

Should Christians Observe the Passover

There are some Christian groups today who are keeping a Passover, but for most it is considered Jewish. The main body of Christianity observe a Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday sequence in commemoration of Jesus' death and resurrection.

So what should Christians be doing? Why are some going back to an ancient observation? What did Jesus do? What did the Apostles and the early church do? The truth may shock you.

The Christian world today believes that the practice of observing Good Friday and Easter Sunday began on the day that Jesus arose from the tomb. They are also under the misunderstanding that the Lord's Supper, when Jesus gave the modern symbols of the bread and wine, was the Passover meal he ate with his disciples that year. Both of these assumptions are wrong.

The truth is that the Apostles and the early church kept the Passover and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread throughout the remainder of their lives. They did not change to an Easter Sunday observance and the Lord's Supper was not the Passover. When the Passover meal began for the Jewish nation in Jerusalem that year, Jesus was already in the tomb. Jesus' death on the stake coincided perfectly with the time that thousands of lambs were being sacrificed at the temple in preparation for the Passover meal that evening.

Jesus became the ultimate sacrificial lamb. It is unlikely that the disciples understood that fact at the time it was all happening, but it was made clear to them on the day of Pentecost when the promised Holy Spirit was given to them. But they did not change and give up the Passover or switch to an Easter Sunday celebration. They continued for the rest of their lives keeping the Holy Days that God gave his people in the Old Testament.

The book of Acts gives us much information about how the early church operated and what they did. When the book closes around the mid 60's CE, a curtain falls on our knowledge of what was happening.

In the 90's John wrote his gospel, the letters attributed to him, and the book of Revelation, then there is silence again until around 120 CE when the Apostolic Fa-



thers (the next generation) began writing. When the early church emerges on the pages of history again, we find the church is still keeping the Passover and the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. We know this because by 150 CE a controversy had emerged over which day was the correct day to observe. This controversy has become known as the "Quatrodecimen Controversy" (*quatrodecimen* meaning "fourteenth"), referring to God's instruction to keep

the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month of Nisan, which did not always fall on a Sunday. Certain factions of the church were attempting to change God's instructions. This conflict within the Christian Church continued well into the fifth century CE.

The western church (centered at Rome) had introduced Easter, a festival that derived from Ishtar or Ashtoreth, the goddess clearly identified with the system of Baal. The eastern church (centered at Antioch) objected to the pagan festival being observed in place of or in addition to the Passover that was commanded by God. The battle continued between the two factions for centuries. The winner of the battle, of course, was the Roman church, who ended up forcing, at the point of the sword, the largest percentage of the Christian world to follow them. It was "comply or die" time in the Christian Church.

When we study the book of Acts, the New Testament letters, and even the writings of the early Apostolic Fathers, we note that there is no mention of them observing Easter. (*Note:* Other than one faulty translation from Greek to English in the King James Bible where a well-meaning translator inserted the word "Easter" in place of the word *Pascha* which always means Passover. Modern scholarship has recognized this error and corrected it in more modern translations.) In fact the only mention of any festivals in the Bible are the Holy Days of God from the Old Testament. There is nothing in the New Testament about the holidays the Christian Church observes today. All of them come from later Church doctrine and are not supported by scripture. Obviously these changes were made quite a long time after the death of Jesus and the beginning of the Christian era. They were not changed on the day that Jesus arose from the tomb.

So what happened to this belief that Jesus "nailed to the cross" the old laws of God or that they were done away with by the New Covenant? History proves that they continued for a period of time longer than the United States has even been a nation.

Just stop and think about that for a minute. If Jesus really intended for the church to change all of God's Holy Days, wouldn't you think that his Apostles would have known about it? Or that they would have taught the new converts about it? They didn't! They kept all of the Holy Days for the remainder of their lives and taught others to do so as well.

Some will argue that the Old Testament Holy Days, including Passover, continued because the early church was a sect inside the Jewish religion, so they maintained Jewish practices. That argument will only hold water until Paul arrives on the scene and begins spreading the word to the Gentiles. The first church council at Jerusalem during the time of the Apostles relieved the Gentiles of the Jewish practice of circumcision, but did not do away with the Holy Days. That council was called because some of the people were teaching that the converts had to first become Jews before they could become Christians. Don't you find that somewhat strange if Jesus came to set them apart? Wouldn't the Apostles have known that was Jesus'

intentions? The fact that they did not hold this belief indicates that Jesus never intended it. That is why they had to meet to determine what the converts had to do. If Jesus' intention had been to do away with God's laws and all things Jewish they would not have needed to meet. They would have known what to do.

By the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., Christianity and Judaism were already beginning to move in opposite directions. The final absolute split between the two came in 135 A.D. with the Bar Kocha rebellion when the Jews were expelled completely from Jerusalem. The Jews became dispersed throughout the nations as punishment for their failure to keep God's laws and for their rejection of the Messiah just as God had promised they would be. But note — they were not exterminated — only distributed. They lost the Promised Land.

Yet we find the Christian church still wrangling over Passover versus Easter for 200 more years after the split and the dispersion of the Jews. The first introduction of the Easter idea came around 150 A.D. and the debate went on for centuries. It was introduced because the Roman church wanted to do away with anything Jewish completely. Did God sanction this attitude? Was this what Jesus taught?

If it is true that Jesus did away with the Jewish ways, why did they continue for so long after his death and for so many generations? Why was he not more clear in declaring a change of these things? Why did he continue to observe God's Holy Days throughout his life if he was going to do away with them? Wouldn't that have been setting a bad example for one who said "do as I do?"

Jesus did not change the Old Testament commandments. The Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, as well as all the other Holy Days, are commandments of God, just as much as are the Ten Commandments.

What does God say about Passover in the Old Testament?

Exo. 12:14 — 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an **everlasting ordinance.**' (NKJV)

Exo. 12:17 — 'So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an **everlasting ordinance.**' (NKJV)

Exo. 12:24 — "And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons **forever.**" (NKJV) (Emphasis above all ours)

The Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are to be observed forever, throughout all your generations. Can any of us determine when forever ends? Do you think this commandment is only for the Israelites?

Remember, the Jewish people represent only two tribes of the original Israelites. They are merely the rem-

nant who were left after God punished Israel and Judah for breaking his commandments. God selected Abraham to be the father of the people he [God] planned to raise up as examples for all the nations to follow. God himself forged them into a nation when he brought them out of Egypt and taught them for forty years in the wilderness. That the nation of Israel let God down is not God's fault and it did not change his laws and commandments.

Also remember that Jesus was Jewish. The early Christian Church was Jewish. They observed God's commandments, including his Holy Day commandments. It was men who decided to separate themselves from all things Jewish. It was not Jesus. In fact, he said:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17-18). That means that not one dot over an "i" or the crossing of one "t" will pass away until the heaven and earth pass away. Well, they are still here, so the Law is still here also. There is just no way to get around that very clear teaching.

Do you think that God does not mean what he says?

Obviously the later church that wanted to do away with all things Jewish thought that God did not mean what he said. They did away with his Old Testament Holy Days, among other things, and instituted new days, practices, and observances — most based on pagan practices and observances. The same temptations that destroyed the nation of Israel have destroyed the Christian Church. It was surely one of the most obvious examples of history repeating itself. By the second and third centuries of the Christian era, the church was chasing after the pagan gods and idols just as the nation of Israel had done centuries earlier. The church was just as much in error as the nation of Israel had been. Israel was punished. The church will be also.

By what authority did the church make so many changes to God's law? The authority of a Pope? Jesus didn't change them, so what authority did the church claim?

By the time of the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.), the Roman Catholic Church was teaching that God had passed on His authority over the affairs of mankind to the Pope. There will always be men who will rise up and claim di-

vine authority to themselves. That was Satan's sin and he passes it on to any who will allow him in.

The Protestant Reformation was as a result of Godly men who rejected the teaching that God had given authority into the hands of the Pope. One of the major themes of the Reformation was a return to the Bible — "the Bible and the Bible only" as the authority — not men and not the Pope. Unfortunately the Protestant Reformation did not go back far enough. They didn't return to the example of the early church but stopped with the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas and his teachings came out of the Roman church. By stopping with him, the Protestant churches retained a large portion of the apostasy of the Roman church and still retain it till today.

When the church threw out the scriptures and assumed God's authority to themselves, the result was the Dark Ages which lasted from the mid 500's A.D. until the Reformation. If the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church truly had God's authority for what they did, why did the world sink into the Dark Ages? That is not God's way and never has been. It is the way of Satan.

The truth is God never gave over authority to men. He is still in charge of the universe and always has been. When men have sought to rise above God or presume to speak for God, they only turn away from Him and His commandments. From the Garden of Eden, the result has always been disastrous.

Those who believe that God blesses their Good Friday/Easter Sunday observance every year are only fooling themselves. God never gave the cross as the symbol of his son. He gave the lamb. God never gave those days to be honored or commemorated. He abhors what people are doing in his name. He gave the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, as well as the other Holy Days.

A complete understanding of the symbology of God's Holy Days helps one to understand why God blesses the days he gave and why he does not bless the man-made observances. To understand what Passover and the other Holy Days mean, send for our free booklet "God's Sabbaths, New Moons and Holy Days and how to observe them." It is a booklet designed to help individuals, families and small gatherings to observe God's Holy Days in the absence of belonging to an already established congregation.



Spring Festival Schedule



Wed., March 16—Sanctification
 Mon., March 21—The Lord's Supper
 Wed., March 23—Passover

Thurs., March 24—First Day of Unleavened Bread
 Sun., March 27—Wave Sheaf
 Wed., March 30—Last Day of Unleavened Bread