

# Are “HOLY DAYS” All ‘Done Away’?

***Despite Frequent New Testament Reference, Churchgoers Rest Assured in the Common Pronouncement that the Biblical Holydays No Longer have Application in the Christian Era. Is There Proof of this One Way or the Other?***

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Religious worship creeds the world over are replete with all sorts of observances: Not only that typical weekly observance, but including many notable and widely regarded annual celebrations, commemorating, as they say, the significant events of the New Testament, the milestones of Christianity. In fact, some of these are so deeply embedded, that even secular society is also inclined to observe them as well, largely ignoring their religious connections.

## **Holydays, What Holydays?**

But there's another set of observances, found in the pages of Scripture, that don't share the same acceptance as do these others **not** having Biblical origin. These others are almost universally ignored and even pointedly rejected. It was determined in the third and fourth centuries that these Biblical Observances were intended by God to be discontinued at and after the Cross! That would have to be the case, if the pronouncement against them is as is almost universally reported.

So we have the situation of Christian religions rejecting days that receive frequent and significant mention in the New Testament while other days, not mentioned, are vigorously embraced!

But is it true? Were those Holy Days, observed up until the time of Christ at least, all done away at the Cross, as most allege? Are there scriptures which establish the fact? How did the early New Testament Church conduct themselves regarding these Holy Days?

A focal verse applied to this question is found in Colossians 2:16. That verse says, *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days.”* That says it all to most people!

Those familiar with the Book of Colossians and the subject of its argument know that the central issue was not Old Testament practices. Most want to assume that it is, but massive evidence exists in the text which clearly demonstrates that the issue was Gnostic teachings and practices that had crept into the theology then being imposed by a growing number of false teachers. Obvious examples being: *“worshipping of angels”* found in verse 18 and *“ordinances...after the commandments and doctrines of men”* in verse 20-22 of the same chapter. Earlier, we are made aware that the object of Paul's repudiation was *“philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world...”* This is in verse 8.

It's too convenient to take and build on the word *“traditions”* by itself, as though only the Jewish religion had any traditions, despite the obvious: That pagan societies had their *“ordinances”* and *“traditions”* also. After all, wasn't the issue of *“meat sacrificed unto idols”* clear acknowledgement that the pagan society in which they lived also practiced a religious sacrificial system! <sup>1</sup> Let's keep in mind, that the Gentile converts, such as in Colosse in eastern Asia Minor, the people to whom Paul was writing, had previously observed and practiced pagan customs, not Jewish customs. Paul was writing to those people's prior beliefs. The Colossians were not Jewish.

Though physical sacrificing was not required of the New Testament Church, to assume that any and all sacrificing mentioned referred only to that under the Old Testament system is seriously remiss! No, it was another *“rudiment of the world”*, something endemic to pagan society as well.

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<sup>1</sup> The early Church had to make a ruling on this question, as most meat available in the public market was from that sacrificed to idols. Acts 7:41, 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 8:4, 10:19-28, Rev. 2:14 & 20

What clear evidence do we find in the book of Colossians that would indicate that the practices and philosophical issues Paul declared to be “*done away*” were those of Old Testament proscription? Yet, that IS the hasty assumption in what is called Christianity, especially the ‘evangelical’ sect, which is often the more ‘activist’ among us, while being the least cognizant in many important areas: Particularly in understanding of the purpose and spiritual illustration embedded in Old Testament practices.

After all, these “*holydays, or the new moons, or the Sabbath days*” **are** “*a shadow of things to come*”! (Verse 17) In other words, an illustration or outline of future events. Who in the evangelical world can explain how they are in a unique way, prophetic? Interesting, that this affirmation comes right after the prime verse used to allege holydays are all done away! And Paul uses the present tense, not the past tense! If he’d believed in their abrogation, he should have used the past tense.

### Extra-Biblical Traditions

We could ask where in the Bible do we find precedent for observing Christ’s birth? Where do we find evidence for determining when it actually was? (In fact, all the evidence that is there suggests that late December would be the least likely possibility, but that’s another article topic.) How did the date get chosen which corresponds to the birth date of another well known ancient ‘deity’? Where is there any precedent of the disciples observing Christ’s resurrection? How did the name of an ancient female worship personality become indelibly attached to the day of His resurrection from the dead? There are a few in various churches who are aware of these issues, but are rather reluctant to discuss them! But these are the prominent and essential observances to which the vast majority ascribe. Some are even famous for attending church on only those two days!

### Observing Pentecost?

How do we in the New Testament era determine Pentecost? Some churches regard this day also as being significant today. Others would be curious why this would be a question, not realizing this day was one of those seven annual Holy Days so many

have settled on as having been ‘done away’! The Day of Pentecost, where God’s Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Disciples so spectacularly was one of those long observed by God’s people from the time of Moses, and likely long before!<sup>2</sup> Some think the first ‘Day of Pentecost’ was **that** one presented in Acts chapter 2. In fact, the Church was observing a day that had long been observed, and had to follow the Pentateuch to determine its date. What most are unaware of is the fact also that the Church was keeping it on a DIFFERENT day than were the Pharisaic Jews of that time.

Verse 2 makes clear that they were assembled in a house, not at the Temple, and verse 1 indicates they did so “*when the day of Pentecost was **fully come***”. The significance of this wording is that they were not keeping the traditional date! This was an ‘unofficial’ gathering. In fact, that year, there had been a **prior observance**, that’s why the specific mention of it having ‘fully come’! The Jews kept Pentecost on Sivan 6, that year a Friday. The True Church kept it two days later! A Sunday, the ‘morrow after the seventh Sabbath’ as Leviticus 23:16 proscribes.

What this proves to us is that they kept this Holy Day in accordance with a different determination. Jewish Tradition was in error on this one!<sup>3</sup>

But they assembled to worship God on what they regarded as an annual Holy Day. They had no real awareness of what was to happen on this day, despite what is said in Acts 1:4-5. But what did happen, we today regard as being the establishment of the New Testament Church. If Holy Days had been ‘done away’ at the Cross, fifty-three days earlier, the disciples hadn’t been made aware of it!

Actually, there is much revealed to us in these few words. First, God could not LIE! If there was no longer a Day of Pentecost, then it would be wrong

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<sup>2</sup> See my article on “*The Selfsame Day*” for evidence of this back in the time of Abraham in Genesis 15.

<sup>3</sup> Traditional Jewish practice was to count Pentecost from the morrow after the first annual Holyday, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15, thus it was always Sivan 6, irrespective of the day of the week. A lesser ascribed practice was to count from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath, thus determining a day not fixed to any calendar date but always a Sunday. (Mt. 15:2-6, Mk. 7:8-9)

to say, not only that it was come, but that it had **fully** come! How could a person say, the day that no longer IS is not only come but is fully come! In other words, the correct and TRUE date, as compared to the premature traditional date observed by most Jews! That Sunday WAS Pentecost, not just the day it *would have been* had there still been one! Saying, it was 'fully come' confirms the fact in profoundly inescapable terms! Otherwise, we are obligated to accept that the inspired scriptures allege that something WAS, that in fact no longer was! (Keep in mind, this narrative was written decades later than the events described. There was plenty of time for the author to have become aware of Holydays having been done away, had that been the actual case!)

### How Do We Fix the Date?

The question was asked above, How do we in the New Testament era determine Pentecost? Because, you see, in answering this question, we are forced to acknowledge the continuing presence of another related group of Biblical Holydays. Pentecost is not a recurring calendar date. Rather, it is determined by a related series of events, also foreign to most religious persuasions. As mentioned, Pentecost is named from a count from another important event, the Wave Sheaf Offering. (Deut. 16:9) But to identify when this offering is, we need first to identify the 'morrow after the Sabbath' that falls within the seven days of Unleavened Bread, another supposedly extinct observance. But to know when the Days of Unleavened Bread are, first there must have been the Passover.

### Say What?

Do we realize what we are looking at when the Book of Acts says the Day of Pentecost was 'fully come'? In order to say that, effectively, the disciples, in being present for the founding of the New Testament Church of God, HAD to have been observing the entire range of Spring Holydays: Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and Wave Sheaf! Without these, they couldn't have known when the day actually was. And, more significant, they used a count method that differed slightly from that employed by the observant Jews! These then, must not have been considered 'done away' at this point in time!

Now, further, in that it apparently was very important that they were observing the **right** date, then isn't it important that we also should be? God didn't acknowledge acceptability by repeating this extraordinary event with observers of alternate dates. But then, how do we determine that date today without knowing when Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are, so that we may determine when the Wave Sheaf Offering date is?

But back to the 'original' day of the outpouring of God's Spirit. Was there any prior pre-condition to being one of those so anointed? Did this happen to just anyone present? Or was it given to only that exclusive few, gathered there only, being totally 'of one accord'? (Acts 2:1)

### Being of One Accord

In that it's mentioned, there must be some significance to their 'being of one accord'. Is the reference to their being in accord with one another, or was there some other significance? In geometry, there's the postulate that: "*two things equal to the same thing are equal to each other*". In other words, if A equals B, and C equals B, then A must also be equal to C. Where I'm going with this, is to suggest that a common accord must have been present between each one and God in order to become recipient of His Spirit. Each of these recipients must have been in accord first with Christ, thru the agency of what He did, and as a result of each of them being so, were secondarily and inevitably also in accord with one another!

But, what was that 'accord', being that God's Spirit was not yet poured out? In other words, these people were pre-converts, in that a prime prerequisite, the receipt of God's Spirit, was, previous to this, not available.<sup>4</sup>

Another important question we need to answer. Would the outpouring of God's Spirit have been possible, had Christ not been 'accepted' as the first of the Firstfruits,<sup>5</sup> on Wave Sheaf Day, and in fact, it was at about the same time that the priests should have been waving their sheaf of grain that Sunday

<sup>4</sup> One commentary states their 'being of one accord' suggests they were gathered together with a single expectation.

<sup>5</sup> John 20:17 An event that occurred early Sunday morning.

morning! <sup>6</sup> The point of this question is, Pentecost is not, and never was, from the beginning, an unrelated date, but was intricately interdependent with other key component events in a series. That to preserve Pentecost, as an observed occasion, **without** those interdependent observances, disregards the essential components of redemption and true conversion. This is clearly NOT an unimportant matter.

Many are familiar with a similar extraordinary outpouring that occurred a decade or so later. This is found in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Chapters of Acts. It's interesting, that it was about the ninth hour that the angel of God appeared to him while he was fasting and during prayer. (Ac. 10:30) Was this on the morrow after the Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread? If it was, it would have been about that same hour that the Wave Sheaf was being offered. <sup>7</sup> The scriptures regard this sufficiently important as to specifically mention it twice, <sup>8</sup> seemingly as a significant factor in authorizing this 'crossover' of interaction with Gentiles!

Even if this event had no time relationship to the Wave Sheaf Offering, it still poses relevance to either of the Daily Sacrifices, which correlate to the 'hour of prayer', which the 'devout' centurion was credited with 'always' (faithfully) adhering to.

If the time reckoning was the Jewish method, then this would have been mid afternoon, corresponding to the times of Christ's death and resurrection. <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> My article on "*Who is the Ancient of Days*" addresses further the question of Christ's presentation before the Father.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to realize that the New Testament uses two different time reckoning methods. Jewish reckoning began the hours at sunrise and sunset. Roman reckoning started the hours at midnight and at noon, much as we do today. Mark uses Jewish reckoning, where John uses Roman! (Compare Mk.15:25 with Jn.19:14.) Luke, in 23:44 at least, uses Jewish reckoning. Cornelius, being a Roman, would more probably have used Roman time, as he is personally quoted in Acts 10:30. In either event, Christ was crucified at about the time of the offering of the morning sacrifice and died at about the time of the evening sacrifice. It was the Holy Spirit who chose the time to appear to Cornelius. Thus the speculation that there was a significance to the hour mentioned.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 10:3, and 30,

<sup>9</sup> My article "*And the Watch Was Set*" examines under-used passages regarding the week days of the crucifixion and resurrection.

## The Feast of Weeks

What enhances the speculation on this is the detail, given to us in Acts 11:28, which perpetuates the Holyday awareness. In response to this event with Cornelius, a mission to the gentiles began, which extended as far as Antioch. (v.22) Of the series of speakers sent from Jerusalem to Antioch, Agabus accurately predicted a 'world famine'. That famine is the one that prompted the concerted actions of the gentile Galatian and Corinthian Churches that we read about in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:1-8. In 16:8, Paul is shown intending to keep Pentecost. Few notice the detail in verse 2, (being pre-occupied with finding a supposed example of Sunday worship services) that Paul instructs the Corinthians, as he previously had the Galatians, to begin harvesting their produce to prepare and **store** it, ON the 'first *day* of weeks'! (Weeks is in the *plural*, here and in Matthew 28:1) If you read this passage carefully, you'll see that he was instructing them to go out and begin harvesting for this purpose ON a specific day. In our language, we have no awareness of 'the first *day* of weeks'. So, our translators changed it to the nearest thing, to say, 'the first *day* of the week'. (Though it also was a Sunday, that wasn't the real point.) Paul was instructing the Corinthians (and Galatians) to harvest, but waiting until the 'first *day* of weeks' to do so. The first '*day* of weeks' is day one of the count to Pentecost, which he was also personally noting, intending to remain in Ephesus there-until! (16:8) The first Day of Weeks is the day **on which** the Wave Sheaf was offered, **and** the day in which it became ceremonially **legal** to begin harvesting that year's grain.

So, here we see a **gentile** congregation being instructed to perform in accordance with Old Testament Ceremonial Law, and he speaks as though they already knew what this day he was referring to was! Gentiles had an awareness of such things, in that they had been taught 'to observe all things', especially those things which Jesus Christ's LIFE was the fulfillment of! And, further, it was not set in strict accordance with Jewish practice, as we saw earlier, in the upper right of page 2.

What is revealing about this passage is that Paul exhibited a regard for a particular day, in order for these gentiles to begin harvesting. The Day of Weeks was day one of their count to the Feast of

Weeks, (Pentecost), which he, in verse 16:8, is also showing a regard for, intending to keep it in Ephesus! To know when Pentecost was, he had to know when Day One to the count to fifty WAS. As stated above, Day One happens to be Wave Sheaf Day! Wave Sheaf Day is the first day in which it became legal to begin their spring harvest. The anniversary of Christ's presentation for acceptance before the *Ancient of Days* as the first of God's Firstfruits. (Daniel 7:13, Psalm 110:1)

So, we see the Apostle Paul, the *Apostle to the gentiles*, instructing these Corinthians to show a **regard** for the Wave Sheaf in their zeal to begin a rescue effort, harvesting their 'first fruits', on behalf of the suffering Saints in the Jerusalem area.

Now, Paul said he intended to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost. We should ask, How could Paul keep a day that wasn't? (Why would he use this day as a time reference with people who didn't know when that was?) He intended to observe the Day of Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks *aka* the Feast of Firstfruits). Had these days truly been 'done away', apparently, no-body informed the Apostle Paul! This was some twenty years after the cross!!

### Then WERE the Days!

After the previously mentioned passage, Acts 11, we see in Chapter 12:3, that those WERE the Days of Unleavened Bread. Could the New Testament scriptures truthfully say those WERE, if in fact they weren't? If done away, they were no longer! And it would be an effective falsehood to say they were.

But we also need to keep in mind that these days, Wave Sheaf and Pentecost, are not unrelated days found on a calendar. Their occurrence is strictly dependent on the Days of Unleavened Bread, as the count to Pentecost begins (Day One of that count) on the morrow after the Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. And, there can be no purposeful fulfillment of the Days of Unleavened Bread without Christ, our Passover having been sacrificed for us. Paul again makes that point to the Corinthians in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:7, citing His sacrifice as **reason** to continue observing the Days of Unleavened Bread! Then, in chapter 11, beginning in verse 17, he re-instructs a gentile congregation exactly HOW to keep the Passover!

### Merely a 'Shadow'

Most astoundingly, the primary verse used to allege these Holy Days being abrogated: (fulfilled, thus done away forever), is found in Colossians, chapter 2, verses 16 & 17. Largely, on the strength of what they perceive the word 'shadow' to mean! (Something that fades from view in the bright light of day! *Conversely*, one could argue that shadows become more bold under stronger light!)

Here again, with just a tweak of wordsmithing, our esteemed translators have managed to obscure the point of this insightful narrative. It says, "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body of Christ.*" In their bias to declare such practices irrelevant, they have overlooked the fact that it is saying that holydays, new moons and Sabbath days portray or illustrate the **outline of future events**. In other words, they are **prophetic**! This changes the perceptions of what these observances illustrate from historic to futuristic. The New Testament overlays a whole new perspective on what these days portray. Not to relegate them to obscurity, but to add a new relevance in New Testament theology. There is a Truth Outline, a prophetic component embedded in them, which is not obvious to those who hold them in a negative regard. There is a considerable point here to miss!

The suggestion is that the Jewish world was judging their performance (not their **non**-performance, please note), when in fact, the subject of the book of Colossians is a refutation of Gnostic ideas, being reincorporated from these Gentiles' past, not Judaic practices. Any commentary worth anything will explain that fact.<sup>10</sup>

The little 'tweak' I refer to above is the insertion of that word "**is**", at the end of verse 17. Where the instruction is to not let men judge our observational expressions, but rather let the Church of God do it, (that's what the 'body of Christ' is, see vs.1:18 & 24.), this presents a whole new perceptual relevance from the typical religious representation.

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<sup>10</sup> Request my collection of articles on "Gnosticism and the New Testament Church".

This passage is not advocating or suggesting non-observance, but WHO we let evaluate HOW we observe! Read the full passage carefully!

Just in the practical observance of this one Holyday, the Feast of Pentecost, we are locked into the whole array of spring Holydays necessary to its determination. It's interesting, those who allege that these days are passé, in that they are 'fulfilled' in Christ, *insist* on keeping those that are most fully fulfilled: Passover, (calling it 'communion'), and Pentecost, the day that commemorates the historic founding of the New Testament Church, (but also the first harvest at the first resurrection). But that insistence presents its own enigma!

### A Shadow of Things to Come

From Colossians 2, we see that the Sabbath and Holydays convey a prophetic component. Yet, the spring Holydays are not the ones that are so much so. Except for the illustration of the firstfruits harvest in Pentecost (the first resurrection / the Feast of Firstfruits), it's primarily the fall Holydays that directly represent prophetic events, such as Christ's Second Coming, and the Millennial Kingdom, followed by the Second Resurrection and the Last Great Day of judgment. Old Testament religion conveyed only the most cursory awareness of these things. The New **added** new dimension!


Later, in the Book of Acts, we see Paul reasoning with both Jews and Greeks in the synagogue in Corinth, every Sabbath. (18:4) Now, this chapter offers something especially interesting. Paul, after declaring his intent to devote his ministry to gentiles, (18:6) and seeing that he continued, doing so there for another 18 months, (v.11), when a protest against his teachings arose, these Greeks ended up beating the chief ruler of the synagogue! (v.17)

We see a previous or concurrent 'ruler of the synagogue', Crispus, becoming a believer (v.8) and his successor or co-ruler, Sosthenes, beaten by those irritated by Paul's teachings. Now, if Paul was teaching, and these two were believing, that the Sabbath and Holydays were all done away, how could they remain rulers of this activist synagogue? And, it's the Greeks (Hellenists, not ethnic Jews) who were the ones so violently incensed! Some time after this, Paul decided to return to Jerusalem,

specifically to observe a Holyday there. (Pentecost) (v.21) This wasn't the only time. Not many years later, we see him doing the same again. (Acts 20:16) Pentecost is the one Holyday that's inter-dependent for its determination on all the other spring Holydays: Passover, which sets the stage for the Days of Unleavened Bread, then Wave Sheaf, which is set from a day that occurs within those seven days. To know when Pentecost truly is, (Jewish opinion differed!), Paul and the early Church had to recount, each year from the morrow after the Sabbath that fell within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

So, just in this one reference to the observance of the Day of Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits, the day upon which began the New Testament harvest of Saints, a harvest period which concludes with the First Resurrection, (1<sup>st</sup>Cor.15:23) we involve the entire interstructure of the spring Holydays to provide its foundation. The GIFT of God's Spirit is predicated upon the sacrificial death of our Passover, and the personal commitment to abstain from a life of sin. After the passing of seven sevens, we look forward to the first harvest of firstfruits unto God. (Rev. 14:4) Implicit in these being the **First** fruits, is the suggestion of a **second** harvest. Who knows about that? (James did. <sup>11</sup>)

Rather than being 'done away', the Holydays of God <sup>12</sup> are exposed as being **revelatory**. When our esteemed religionists open the door into their realm of semi-darkness, and allow-in the full 'glorious light of the gospel', these 'shadowy areas' will become more discernable, and maybe then they can understand the NEED for the multiple resurrections and an earthly Millennial Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> These distinct and prominent New Testament Doctrines are also absent from their anesthetic theology.

If, in fact, the Holydays are done away, the Apostle Paul and the early New Testament writers didn't apparently get the message! Nor did the Prophet Isaiah, who prophesied that upon Christ's return, **all flesh** shall come to worship the LORD, each Sabbath day and also on each Holyday! (Isa.66:23) This too, we all should ponder! 

<sup>11</sup> James 5:7 "Be patient...unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth... until he receives the **early** and **latter** rain."

<sup>12</sup> "These are the feasts of the LORD..." (Elohim) Lev.23:4

<sup>13</sup> Rev. 20:5, 21:2, Zech. 14, etc.