

Does It *Really* Matter What DAYS We Keep?

Some observe Saturday, some observe Sunday; some keep Christmas and Easter "to Christ," others refuse, saying those days are pagan in origin; some keep the Jewish-Biblical holy days, others say they are abolished. Some Christians keep the Passover with the Jews, others keep "it" a day earlier. Some keep Pentecost when the Jews do, others observe "it" on Sunday every year. Why? Who sets the standards, anyway? Does it really matter what days we observe? What does GOD ALMIGHTY say about this question?

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If it really doesn't matter at all, then I suppose a person could just as easily "go along with the crowd," and be a member of the "vast majority," insofar as observing spiritual or religious holidays. Buddhists, Muslims, and Hindus have a whole set of different holidays than Christians and Jews. But even Christians are dis-united and in disagreement over the subject of holy days. Catholics and Protestants observe most of the same holidays, particularly Sunday worship, Easter and Christmas, but Seventh-Day Adventists, and others, claim the Sabbath is on Saturday and that Sunday worship is nowhere sanctioned in the Bible. And they are right! Catholic theologians admit it, and claim "church authority" for their imposition of Sunday worship upon the western world!

Who decides what days Christians ought to worship, anyway? Is it a matter of "church authority"? If so, then I suppose it depends on which "church" you belong to! For example, some churches I know observe Passover on Nisan 14, and when people point out that the Jews and the Old Testament plainly show Nisan 15 is the Feast day when the Passover was eaten, the ministers of those churches -- finding they cannot contradict or disprove the proofs presented to them -- finally make their appeal to their own "church authority," and say people ought not to "rock the boat" or "sow discord among the brethren." Those who disagree with the church teaching on such an issue find themselves "booted out" of the church and branded from the pulpit as "trouble-makers."

Whose Opinion Counts?

However, it ought to be plain to anyone that despite what men and ministers, churches and religious leaders, say, the final authority belongs to ALMIGHTY GOD. He is the only One who has the right to tell us what days to observe and WHEN to observe them. To do anything CONTRARY to the word and will of Almighty God on this matter would constitute nothing less

than insubordination and spiritual REBELLION, which God Himself says is as the sin of *witchcraft!* (I Sam.15:23). Therefore, let's see what the Scriptures say about which day we ought to observe -- if we desire to please God, and inherit eternal life!

Let's notice the plain principles outlined in the Word of God on this matter.

Principle #1 -- God Is Not Pleased with Pagan Worship

Does God have a set of holy days given in His Word? Are they commanded to be observed forever?

Few Christians have apparently given any thought to this question. They just go along with the crowd, and believe that Christmas and Easter are Christian in origin. However, every year newspapers and articles point out that Christmas antedates Christ by thousands of years, and December 25 was the celebration of the "birthday of Mithras," the sun god! Easter, also, derives its very name from Eostre, or Astarte, the pagan goddess of the spring. It also ante-dates the resurrection of Christ by thousands of years, and was celebrated as the festival of the resurrection of Attis, or Bacchus, or Tammuz, the pagan god who was "killed," and then supposedly "resurrected," thousands of years before Christ, soon after the Flood.

Historical documentation is easy to provide or obtain on the preceding truths. Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons* gets right to the point, showing the pagan origin of these holidays. Any reliable encyclopedia will also show you the origin of these days, and how the Catholic church in the fourth century began to adopt and "baptize" pagan days and to call them "Christian," even though historically they had nothing to do with Christ and were never observed by Jesus or the early apostles or early Church!

As Christians, then, should we observe such days?

Principle #1 in God's Word tells us: "**Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen . . . For the customs of the people are VAIN**" (Jeremiah 10:1-3). This chapter goes on to describe a pagan custom of cutting a tree out of the forest, bringing it home, decorating it with gold and silver, and fastening it so it will stand upright. This is an obvious description of a "Christmas tree," and such "tree worship" goes back to ancient German times, long before Christ, and has nothing to do with Biblical Christianity!

But is it wrong to take pagan customs and traditions, and to dress them up in "Christian" garments, and to use pagan customs to worship the TRUE God?

God's Word tells us in no uncertain terms: "**When the LORD thy God shall cut off the [pagan] nations from before thee . . . Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them . . . and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God [that is, worship Him with pagan customs!]: For every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods . . . What thing soever I command you, observe to do IT: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it**" (Deut.12:30-32).

How plain it is! We must not worship the Lord our God by using PAGAN practices, methods, rituals, holidays, or the like. Rather, we are commanded to worship Him ONLY by the word and commandments HE has given to us, and *not to add anything to it from paganism, or from our OWN ideas or opinions!*

But what days does the Word of God command us to observe, if any? Are there any Biblically-commanded holy days?

Principle # 2 -- God's Holy Days Are Forever

Principle #2 in the Word of God tells us that indeed God has set forth holy days for His people to observe -- holy days which are commanded FOR EVER! God says in His Word: **"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it HOLY"** (Exodus 20:8). **"Keep the sabbath day, and sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee"** (Deut.5:12). **"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual [eternal, everlasting] covenant"** (Exo.31:14-16).

The Sabbath day was part of the Law of God revealed to Israel through Moses. It was one of the very Ten Commandments. Not Sunday. Not Monday. Not Friday. But the seventh day of the week -- the Sabbath day! It is declared by God to be HOLY TIME, and must not be defiled or desecrated, defaced or corrupted. But how many Christians have been deluded by a master-magician devil to be deceived into thinking "Sunday," the first day of the week, is the proper day for worship? Unfortunately, the overwhelmingly vast majority! Indeed, Satan has done his dirty work very well -- and has deceived just about the entire world (Rev.12:9).

Along with the Sabbath day, God also commanded certain ANNUAL holy days to be observed by His people -- beginning with Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost -- the spring festivals. **"For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt . . . And THIS DAY shall be unto you for a MEMORIAL: and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance FOR EVER"** (Exodus 12:12-14). The Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a seven day festival, was ordained by God to be observed **"in your generations by an ordinance for ever"** (Exo.12:17).

Fifty days after the Passover, came the feast of Pentecost, or Shavuot, the "Feast of Weeks," so named because it followed Passover by counting "seven weeks" (Deut.16:9; Lev.23:10-16). It also was **"a statute FOR EVER in all your dwellings throughout your generations"** (Lev.23:21). Other annual holy days God commanded His people to observe were held in the fall of the year, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets on Tishri 1 ("Rosh Hoshanah" or 'Yom Teruah'), the Day of Atonement on Tishri 10 ("Yom Kippur"), the seven day Feast of Tabernacles on Tishri 15-21 ("Sukkot"), followed by the Feast of the Eighth Day (or "Last Day," also known as "Shemini Atzeret") on Tishri 22nd. These feasts are all enumerated in Leviticus 23 where God says of them: **"These are the FEASTS of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons"** (Lev.23:4).

No mention at all of "Christmas," or "Easter," or "Halloween," or "St. Patrick's Day," or "Valentine's Day," or any other holiday observed in the world today! These worldly holidays are NOT FROM THE BIBLE! They are not sanctioned by the Word of God! Unlike the Biblical holy days, these other days are *pagan in origin and trace back to ancient PAGAN RITES, FESTIVITIES, AND HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS in honor of pagan deities, divinities, and idolatrous gods and goddesses!*

"But wait a minute," some might object. "I thought the 'Law' of God was abolished. Wasn't the Sabbath and annual festivals all abolished by Jesus Christ? Are we not now 'FREE' from having to observe that old 'Law'?"

Principle #3 -- God's Law Is Forever

Principle #3 is -- When God does something, it is forever. He is not a fickle Person who constantly "changes His mind." He doesn't make mistakes. Everything He does is GOOD (Gen.1:31).

Never assume anything! God does not lie, or repent. You may have been taught by various and sundry ministers that the holy days of God are no longer required under the New Covenant teaching of Christ, but BEWARE! Many "liars" have gone out into the world, called "Antichrists" by the apostle John, and are spreading heresy, lies, and false doctrine which is an abomination in the sight of God! Think for a minute! What's wrong with the holy days which God Almighty Himself gave to His people? Would God give them something evil, or harmful? The holy days of God are a tremendous spiritual GIFT to His people, which keep them in mind of the True God, and which impart valuable spiritual lessons when observed properly -- unlike the mistle-toe nonsense and pagan revelry of Christmas and the foolery of Easter, with its chocolate bunnies laying brightly-colored "eggs"! The apostle James writes: "Every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (Jas.1:17).

Have the holy days of God been abolished? Once God introduced them, and said they are ordained **FOR EVER**, is there any way He would turn around and "abolish" them? Wouldn't that make Him out to be a LIAR, who said one thing, and did another? The apostle Paul wrote of "**God, that cannot lie**" (Titus 1:2). The prophet Samuel declared of God, "**The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent**" (I Sam.15:29). The prophet Malachi quotes God as saying: "**For I am the LORD, I change not . . .**" (Mal.3:6). Goes does not change -- He does not lie -- He does not repent. Therefore, HIS LAW OF THE ANNUAL HOLY DAYS HAS TO STILL BE IN FORCE TODAY, JUST AS HE SAID IT WOULD ALWAYS BE!

"But didn't Jesus Christ come to do away with the Old Covenant? Doesn't that fact abolish the holy days and Sabbath days?" Ay, there is the rub. That's what millions believe. But is it true? Does it, or doesn't it?

***Principle #4 -- Christ Did Not Come
To Abolish the LAW!***

Principle #4 is -- Jesus Christ did not come to do away with anything that God the Father established on a perpetual basis. He did not come to abolish ANY "eternal" law of God, or any law God established "forever." Notice what Jesus Himself said on this matter! He, like God the Father, cannot lie. He is the personification of pure Truth (John 14:6). He said, "**Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in NO WAY pass from the LAW, till ALL be fulfilled**" (Matthew 5:17-18). Wow! Did you get that? WOW!!!

Those are very heavy words. Jesus said "verily," that is, "Of a truth," and then proceeded to knock the socks off all the anti-Law preachers, ministers, and pseudo-saints, priests, popes, and pontificating prelates -- He leaves them all stripped NAKED before the Law of God! He said "IN NO WAY" would anything pass from the Law -- not even a smidgeon, not even a tiny vowel point, not even a little flick of the pen -- till heaven and earth passed away -- till ALL the plan of God is completely fulfilled, and there is a New Heavens and a New Earth!

Obviously, "all" has not yet been fulfilled. And God's Law is very much in force, today, just as it was when Jesus said these words 2,000 years ago, and when the Law was given to Moses 3,500 years ago, when it was observed by Abraham some 4,000 years ago (Gen.26:5), and all the way back to Adam and Eve. Why Adam and Eve? Because God's LAW has ALWAYS been in force -- as summarized by the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath Day itself was given to mankind AT CREATION (compare Genesis 2:1-3 and Mark 2:27-28).

Transgression of God's Law is what defines SIN (I John 3:4). The wages of SIN is death (Rom.6:23). The apostle Paul wrote, "Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] SIN entered into the world, and *death by sin*; and so death passed upon all men, *for that all have sinned* (Rom.5:12). Since sin has been in the world ever since Adam and Eve, and all men have "sinned," and since "SIN IS the transgression of the LAW" of God (I John 3:4), this proves that *God's LAW has always been in existence from the time of ADAM!* At Mount Sinai, God merely reiterated the Law, and enumerated its fine points. Paul explained, "(For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no LAW. Nevertheless, DEATH [the penalty of SIN] reigned from Adam to Moses . . ." (Rom.5:13-14). Death could not have reigned, if there had been no LAW.

The truth is plain. Without Law, there can be no such thing as "SIN." By definition, sin is transgressing the LAW of God. That is why Jesus Christ was so adamant about His not having come to "do away" with the Law of God! He came to pay the penalty for our sins, by taking our "death penalty" upon Himself (John 3:16), becoming a sin-offering and sacrifice for us (II Cor.5:21), just as Isaiah the prophet foretold some 712 years before (Isaiah 53:3-9).

Can you imagine? If there were no spiritual Law in existence, then there would be no such thing as "SIN." That means, murder would be legal; adultery would be legal; robbery and theft would be legal; cursing and swearing and foul language would be legal; massacre and mayhem would be legal; rape, rapine, violence, lying, cheating, swearing falsely, butchering

innocent people -- EVERYTHING YOU CAN THINK OF, WOULD BE PERFECTLY *LEGAL!*
There would be no law against ANY INHUMAN CONDUCT!

Complete CHAOS would reign! Only the truly wicked and malevolent would desire such a situation. Suffering, misery, inhumanity, cruelty, terror, horror, unbelievable crime and unspeakable brutality would fill the earth. Only the devil, or those with his spirit, would be happy in such a sick, empty, worthless world!

No, Christ did not come to abolish the Law, or to change a single holy day of God. He Himself said to a young rich man, "**If thou wilt enter into life [eternal life], KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS**" (Matthew 19:16-17). When the young rich man asked Him, "Which?" Jesus replied, listing some of the Ten Commandments as examples, showing which system of Laws He was speaking about -- that is, GOD'S LAWS, *given at Mount Sinai!*

"But," some might still wonder, "Doesn't the New Covenant itself replace those Old Testament Laws"?

***Principle #5 -- the New Covenant Does
 NOT Abolish God's Laws, Either!***

Principle #5 tells us that nothing is done away unless God's Word tells us its done away. The New Covenant does not abolish God's Laws, it ENHANCES AND MAGNIFIES God's Laws! Prophesying of Christ, Isaiah the prophet wrote, "**The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will MAGNIFY the law, and make it honorable**" (Isa.42:21).

Paul explains the true relationship between the "Old Covenant" and the "New Covenant" in Hebrew, chapter 8. We read, "**For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with THEM [that is, the PEOPLE!], he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah . . .**" (Hebrews 8:7-8).

Notice! The fault was in the PEOPLE -- not in the Laws of the Old Covenant! The people were rebellious, disobeyed, and broke the covenant -- that was the problem! How is God going to SOLVE that problem with the "New Covenant"?

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put MY LAWS into their MIND, and write them in their HEARTS: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb.8:9-10). Notice! Same LAWS -- but this time they won't just be written on stone, or on scrolls -- they will be written in the minds and hearts of God's people! How will He do this? By the Holy Spirit of God! God will, in the future, pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and then He will write His laws into their hearts and minds and subconscious -- indelibly and eternally. "**For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God . . . And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ**" (Rom.8:14-17). "**But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his**" (Rom.8:9). "**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and**

of a sound mind" (II Tim.1:7).

Principle #6 -- Jesus Christ Does Not Change

Principle #6 is that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever -- like His Father, He also "changes not." The apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote: "**Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today, and forever**" (Heb.13:8). He teaches the very same things today that He taught 2,000 years ago. His message does not change. He Himself observed God's Law and the annual holy days of God when He was on this earth, 2,000 years ago -- including the Passover (Luke 2:41-43; John 2:13; John 2:23; 5:1; 11:55-57), and the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 8-11, 37-39).

Since Christ does not change, even as God the Father does not change (Malachi 3:6), then He would never change or alter an ETERNAL LAW of Almighty God! He is not a disobedient Son, or an unruly Son, who the Father cannot trust. He came to preach the words the Father gave Him to say -- nothing more, nothing less! Jesus Himself declared: "**I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of my Father which hath sent me**" (John 5:30). Jesus added: "**My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me**" (John 7:16). Furthermore, He explained that He NEVER contradicted the Father! He declared, "**For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father, which hath sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak**" (John 12:49).

Jesus Christ and the Father are perfectly united in thought, word and deed. There is no division between them. Both of them uphold the Laws of God, which they originally ordained forever. As we read in the Psalms: "**The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast FOR EVER AND EVER, and are done in truth and uprightness**" (Psalm 111:7-8).

Principle #7 -- God's Law Is PERFECT

Why would God or Christ CHANGE something that is "perfect"? To change something that is "perfect" would be to render it "imperfect." There can only be one perfection. And David said of God's Law, which includes His holy days, "**The law of the LORD is PERFECT, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes**" (Psalm 19:7-8).

We must not "tamper" with PERFECTION! God's Holy Days are perfectly designed to accomplish their purpose in teaching mankind vital truths about the Plan of Salvation, the Plan of God. They are the KEYS to solving the "mystery of the ages."

This is why David wrote, "**Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law**" (Psalm 119:18). He added: "**Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked who forsake thy law. Thy statutes [God's holy days are "statutes" of God -- see Leviticus 23:21, 31, 41] have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage**" (Psalm 119:53-

God's Law is perfection. Therefore it can and will never be changed. Why, then, did Christ come, if not to "change" the Law, as so many preach? As we have already seen, one reason Christ came was to teach us to OBEY God's Law! But even more than that . . .

Principle #8 -- To Set Us An EXAMPLE

Peter tells us that Christ left us an *example*, "**that ye should follow his steps**" (I Pet.2:21). John confirms this, writing, "**He that sayeth he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked**" (I John 2:6).

Jesus Christ observed God's annual holy days -- but He never observed Christmas or Easter or the pagan-origin holidays the professing Christian church observes today. Obviously, a great apostasy has occurred, and many have departed from the true faith (Gal.1:6-9). Many false ministers have led millions astray from the truth (II Cor.11:13-15).

There are many "antichrists" in the world, teaching contrary to the example set by Christ, and contrary to His very words, His message, and commandments (I John 2:18-19; II John 7). Those who deny Christ are antichrists (I John 2:22). "**They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate**" (Titus 1:16). *The spirit of "antichrist" is the spirit of DISOBEDIENCE to the Law of God! They deny Him in their "works." They do not follow His example, and observe the same days He did, setting us a perfect EXAMPLE, that we should follow HIS STEPS!*

Principle #8, therefore, tells us that Christ set us an EXAMPLE, of how we ought to live. We ought to imitate Christ every way. As the apostle Paul wrote, "**Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ**" (I Cor.11:1).

Jesus Christ observed the Passover throughout His life on earth. The gospel of John makes it clear that He observed it throughout His ministry. He observed it at the very same time that the Jewish people did (Luke 2:41-42). They never accused Him of observing the wrong day, nor did He ever accuse them of observing the wrong day or wrong time. They were in perfect harmony at least on this issue.

Jesus Christ set us a PERFECT example of obeying the Laws of God, including the annual holy days. He Himself taught their observance. He proclaimed, "**The sabbath was MADE FOR MAN, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath**" (Mark 2:27-28). The term "Sabbath" includes both the weekly Sabbath Days, as well as the annual Sabbath days (see Leviticus 23:24, 32, 38, 39).

Paul said he followed Christ's example, and we are to follow his. Did Paul continue to observe God's annual holy days, after his conversion? He most certainly did! Paul told the church at Ephesus, "**I must by all means keep this FEAST that cometh in Jerusalem**" (Acts 18:21). At the city of Philippi, he observed "**the days of unleavened bread**" (Acts 20:6), and

then sailed away to Troas. This was in 60 A.D. Paul had been converted by a miracle in 32 A.D., spent three years in Arabia being taught the word of God by Christ (Galatians 1:16-18), and had been an apostle for about 25 years. Yet we read in the book of Acts, that Paul "**hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost**" (Acts 20:16).

As a Pharisee, Paul would have observed this Feast Day on Sivan 5, 6, or 7, counting the "omer" from the second day of Passover, or Nisan 16th (see Acts 23:6-7). Paul said he was, "**as touching the law, a Pharisee**" (Phil.3:5), and he said he was, "**as touching the righteousness which in the law, BLAMELESS**" (Philippians 3:6). As a Pharisee, he would have observed the Feast of Shavuot or Pentecost, fifty days after Passover, or Sivan 5, 6 or 7 -- and not a "Sunday" Pentecost, as some churches and Messianic Jews do, today! He would have observed the same date as the Orthodox and Conservative Jews do, today, who are the rabbinical descendants of the ancient Pharisees!

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, also mentions that when Paul was sailing to Rome, in bonds, it was late in the year and a dangerous time to sail -- "**because the FAST was already past**" (Acts 23:7). What "fast" was this? This was the holy day of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which was a day of fasting and affliction of the self (see Lev.23:27-32).

Thus Paul was faithful in observing the Holy Days of God throughout his ministry. He never taught against them. In fact, while before Festus, while he was on trial, he exclaimed, "**Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple . . . have I offended anything at all**" (Acts 25:8). And later, while in Rome, he told the Jews at Rome, "**Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans**" (Acts 28:17).

Paul therefore followed Christ in observing God's annual Holy Days. And he also taught the Church to do this as well, for we read in his epistle to the Corinthian church, "**Purge out therefore the old leaven . . . as ye are [physically] unleavened [they were observing the Days of Unleavened Bread]. For even Christ OUR PASSOVER is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us KEEP THE FEAST . . .**" (I Cor.5:7-8). The Church was in the process of observing the days of Unleavened Bread, having put out the old leaven. Paul exhorted them to *keep the Feast of Passover, also called the Feast of Unleavened Bread!*

Principle #9 -- Who Sits in Moses' Seat?

Who has the "authority" to determine matters of observance of God's Law? Which religious leaders sit in "Moses' seat"? Was it the Sadducees, of whom Jesus said, "**Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God**" (Matt.22:29)? The Sadducees did not even believe in angels, spirits, demons, or the resurrection from the dead (Matt.22:23; Acts 23:6-8).

In fact, Jesus said to His disciples, "**The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, THAT OBSERVE AND DO . . .**" (Matthew 23:1-3). Jesus acknowledged that the spiritual leaders of the Jewish nation were the scribes and Pharisees. They were the true teachers of the

Law, and had authority which was passed down from Moses' time. He actually said that *they sat in Moses' seat* -- that is, that they were the modern representatives and descendants of the long line of religious teachers that came down from Moses, through Ezra the scribe, and down to His own generation.

In acknowledging this authority, Jesus said His followers were to also acknowledge it, and observe "whatsoever they bid you observe." Jesus was discussing the LAWS of God, the Torah -- the teachings derived from Moses! He was not of course referring to the "traditions" that the Pharisees "added" to the laws of God (compare Matthew 15:1-9), but only the LAWS of God derived from Moses. Therefore, what Jesus referred to here would certainly include the annual HOLY DAYS of God! His words, "whatsoever they bid you observe," would clearly refer to the annual holy days, the holy calendar, and the appointed festivals of the Lord.

Principle #9 implies that we should pay special attention to the teachings and practices of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees observed Passover by killing the lambs at the Temple courtyard, in Jerusalem, in the late afternoon of Nisan 14, and then taking the lambs home and roasting them that evening (Exodus 12:6), until they were thoroughly cooked -- and then celebrated the Passover dinner, or "seder" -- which means, "setting forth," or "order" -- that very night of Nisan 15th (Exodus 12:8), the very night the "death angel" or Lord killed the firstborn of the Egyptians and "passed over" the houses of the Israelites (Exo.12:12, 29).

In Christ's day, the Passover lambs were being killed at the Temple of God at the very same time that Jesus Christ, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29), was being slain on the stake, and died for our sins, on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the Temple site.

This means, then, that true Christians, and Messianic Christians, ought to observe this same practice, and observe the Passover the very same time, manner, and date that the early Christians, Christ and the apostles, and the Jewish people, led by the scribes and Pharisees, observed it some 2,000 years ago -- *on the night of the 15th of Nisan!* To observe it one night earlier would be to miss the entire point of the Passover! It would be a worthless endeavor -- a useless ritual. It would be just as bad as if some foolish ancient Israelite had gotten his days mixed up, and back in Egypt had killed and roasted *his* lamb a night earlier, and daubed his door posts with its blood a night earlier. No death angel appeared that night. But the *next night*, when he should have done it, he would have not done so -- and he would NOT HAVE BEEN PASSED OVER! The firstborn in his family -- even if it were he himself -- would have been SLAIN!

Principle # 10 -- the Passover Is a Season of JOY

The Passover of God was a time of great deliverance from slavery and oppression. It represented release from onerous slavery and newfound FREEDOM and LIBERTY. The Jewish people call it "The Festival of Freedom." And so it is. Passover night God rescued His people from Egypt, destroying all the Egyptian firstborn. Then He said to Israel, "**It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt: THIS IS THAT NIGHT OF THE LORD to be observed OF ALL THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL in their generations**" (Exodus 12:42). It is a time of festive celebrating, joyous laughter, exuberance and

excitement for the family, led by the father or elder present at the seder table.

But thousands of people who believe in observing the Passover, today, have been taught that Christ CHANGED the Passover from observing a Passover dinner-seder, in which the miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt is told in a family setting, to abolishing the dinner, with bitter herbs, matzah (unleavened bread), and a wonderful celebration with songs and story-telling in which everybody participates, to a dreary, mournful, funereal service like a "mass" with nothing but a tiny piece of matzah and a thimble of wine. And, they have been taught, He changed it from the beginning (night-portion) of Nisan 15 to the beginning (night portion) of Nisan 14. And many have been observing this mournful "rite" for decades, without realizing that what they call the Passover has absolutely no connection with the Bible's *Passover* celebration! *They have been observing a fraudulent, imitation, false "Passover" for decades without realizing how seriously they have been misled by erring, ignorant teachers and ministers!*

The truth is, *they have never observed the TRUE PASSOVER in all their lives!*

Shocking to some as it may seem, thousands have been deceived. They have NEVER EVER OBSERVED THE TRUE PASSOVER -- yet they THINK that they have been doing so for many years!

Truly, as Solomon wrote in warning 3,000 years ago: **"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"** (Prov.14:12; 16:25).

Principle #11 -- Prove ALL Things!

Principle #11 is that God warns His people to **"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good"** (I Thess.5:21). People who have been mistaught, and misled, have no excuse to continue following error. God commands all people everywhere: **"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth ALL MEN to REPENT [that is, to change, about-face, and begin OBEYING the Laws of God]"** (Acts 17:30). Too many of us have assumed too much over the years, without studying God's Word and PROVING the truth of God for ourselves.

Paul praised the Bereans because they took this responsibility seriously. They did not "assume." They did not just "believe the preacher," no matter how impressive his "credentials" appeared to be on the surface. Luke wrote of the Bereans, **"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with ALL READINESS OF MIND, and SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, whether those things were so"** (Acts 17:11).

It is the obligation of each and every one of us before the throne of God to RESEARCH into these things, and PROVE them to ourselves -- like the Bereans did. We have no excuse. God will accept no excuses. God commands, **"STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY DIVIDING the word of God"** (II Tim.2:15). God tells us the right attitude we should have in our study. Isaiah declared, **"Thus saith the LORD . . . to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite [humble] spirit, and trembleth at my word"** (Isaiah 66:2).

Principle #12 -- BEWARE OF MEN!

Principle #12 is to remember the words of Jesus Christ, and **"BEWARE OF MEN"** (Matthew 10:17). David also warned, **"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man"** (Psalm 118:8). Also, **"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes [leaders, ministers, those with supposed "authority" to lead and teach]"** (verse 9). And, God warns every one of us, regardless of our background: **"Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish"** (Psalm 146:3-4).

Many people put their trust in ministers in the Worldwide Church of God, United Church of God, Global Church of God, Philadelphia Church of God, International Church of God, or some other offshoot of Worldwide, or some Messianic group, only to see their trust and faith shattered. When will we learn the lesson? What will it take? Many, over the years, put their faith in Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of the Worldwide Church of God, whom God indeed used to reveal many wonderful truths to this end-time generation.

But faith in a man, or human being, is always misplaced. Herbert W. Armstrong made many mistakes, and God did not reveal all truth to him. More and more truth is being revealed as we near the END of this age. As Daniel the prophet foretold, **"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and KNOWLEDGE shall be increased"** (Daniel 12:4).

The question is -- are we willing to FACE this new knowledge, and prove it, and accept it, when God leads us to it? Are we willing to **"OBEY God rather than man"** (Acts 5:29)???

Principle #13 -- Fear GOD!

Principle #13 is that **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction"** (Proverbs 1:7). To learn the knowledge of God, we must fear Him -- stand in AWE of Him, and His Word. As king David wrote, **"Stand in AWE, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness [obedience to God's commandments -- see Psalm 119:172], and put your trust in the LORD"** (Psalm 4:4-5). To have knowledge -- and to refuse to obey it -- is sin. The apostle James wrote: **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is SIN"** (James 4:17).

The fear of God is the beginning of right knowledge. It sets us on the right path. If we fear God properly, then we will study His Word with a desire to learn exactly and precisely what God wants us to do in our lives -- regardless of what various "men" try to tell us!

The lack of the fear of God leads to a lack of the right kind of knowledge -- the knowledge of God and His Word. Only those who FEAR God will spend the necessary time in diligent Bible study to insure that they are never misled by erring ministers and false teachers.

The prophet Hosea warned, "**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest [or, minister or servant of God] to me; seeing thou hast FORGOTTEN THE LAW of thy God, I will also forget thy children**" (Hosea 4:6).

Lack of fear of God leads to lack of true knowledge, and lack of true knowledge leads to disobedience to the Laws of God. A shallow, peripheral, surface understanding of God's Holy Days and "Passover" is not enough. To observe any of His Holy Days *at the wrong time* is unworthy of a true Christian and servant of the living God! To continue to do so, when the truth is available and can be proved, is tantamount to stubbornness and REBELLION! As the prophet Samuel told king Saul of ancient Israel, "**For rebellion is as the sin of WITCHCRAFT, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast REJECTED the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king**" (I Samuel 15:23).

Principle #14 --There are No SMALL SINS in God's Sight!

Does it really matter what "days" we observe? Is it a "small thing" to err by just "one day" as to the correct time and date to observe Passover? Is it only a "small thing" to keep it in a different manner than God's people have observed it for countless generations -- as a funereal "wake" instead of a joyous family celebration of life and liberty?

According to the Word of God, it makes a great deal of difference. Old king Saul may have thought that it was a "SMALL THING" that he had not *precisely* obeyed God's commandment to kill all the Amalekites, including their king and their cattle (I Samuel 15:1-9). He returned from the battle with booty, much cattle, and sheep, and "**would not utterly destroy them: but everything that was vile, and refuse, that they destroyed utterly**" (I Sam.15:9). Then God said to Samuel, "**It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath NOT performed my commandments**" (verse 10).

Saul disobeyed. It may have seemed a "small matter" in his own sight. Just a "technical detail." But not so in the eyes of Almighty GOD! What seems trivial and unimportant to a man may be a MAJOR SIN in the sight of God!

God demands perfection. He said to Abraham, "**I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect**" (Genesis17:1). Jesus Christ declared, in the Sermon on the Mount, "**Be ye therefore PERFECT, even as your Father in heaven is perfect**" (Matthew 5:48).

How dare we "trivialize" God's commandments!

Principle #15 -- Separate the Clean and Unclean

Principle #15 is that the Word of God declares that we MUST understand and discern the DIFFERENCE between the "clean and unclean" -- good and evil -- obedience to God and disobedience. When God says "Jump," we should immediately "jump." Not when some "minister" or "human being says "jump."

Malachi wrote, "**Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not**" (Malachi 3:16-18).

Isaiah wrote: "**Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, TOUCH NO UNCLEAN THING; go ye out of the midst of her [churches that have Babylonian doctrines]; BE YE CLEAN, that bear the vessels of the LORD. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward [that is, rear guard]**" (Isa.52:11-12). In other words, God says we must DEPART from false teachings, Babylonian customs, and counterfeit doctrines that have a "semblance" of truth but which are Satanic counterfeits and frauds and spiritual forgeries!

Ezekiel foretold the end-time apostasy among God's people, and His churches -- the end-time branches of His true Church. Ezekiel was told by God, "**There is a conspiracy of her prophets [religious leaders and ministers] in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things [gotten rich and wealthy off the tithes and offerings of God's people!]; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have VIOLATED MY LAW, and have profaned MY HOLY THINGS [including HOLY DAYS]: they have put NO DIFFERENCE between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from MY SABBATHS, and I was profaned among them**" (Ezek.22:25-26).

Let's understand this matter! God means business. All those end-time ministers who teach observing Passover on the *wrong day*, and in the *wrong manner*, who thus *violate God's holy Law*, will be held strictly accountable for profaning God's Sabbaths, and His truth. They will be judged very severely for having put no difference between the "clean" and "unclean," and for having substituted PAGAN "mass" funereal-like "passover services" -- UNCLEAN in God's sight -- for the true, wonderful, delightful Passover God commanded!

Ezekiel continues: "**Her princes in the midst thereof are like WOLVES [in sheep's clothing! --Matt.7:15] ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered [untrustworthy] mortar, seeing vanity, and divining LIES unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken**" (Ezek.22:27-28).

These wicked end-time ministers will not profit the people of God at all. In the end, they will lead them to utter destruction, if they don't repent. And that warning applies to the thousands of people who have been misled by them as well! "**Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap**" (Galatians 6:7).

Principle #16 -- Beware of VAIN Worship

Did you know that it is possible to really "worship" Christ, to worship God, and to do it all IN VAIN?

Millions are guilty of that very thing, today, because their worship is not formulated by the Word of God, and they have replaced the truth of God with human, man-made *traditions!*

Modern ministers, unfortunately, are very much like the Pharisees of Christ's time, who tended to substitute man-made "traditions" in place of the commandments of God. Jesus Christ warned them: "**Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? . . . Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah the prophet prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men**" (Matthew 15:3-9).

Christ made much the same assertion in the gospel of Mark. He declared, "**Howbeit IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the *tradition of men*, and the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own *tradition***" (Mark 7:7-9).

Is "church tradition" more important than the commandments of God? Some seem to think so. Some seem to feel that since they have been observing "Passover" a certain way, at a certain time and date, for twenty or thirty years, or more, that their "practice" has become "hallowed" by age -- it has become a "church tradition." They see or feel no obligation or compunction to change their practice, now, at this time. What was "good enough" for Herbert W. Armstrong, and the Church of God, from the 1930's until his death in 1986, seems to be "good enough" for them, at this time.

But Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah, said plainly, with no sugar-coating, that such worship is "**IN VAIN.**" His words are recorded by both Matthew and Mark -- God saw fit that we be exposed to this example and teaching **TWICE.**

Obviously, this subject was and is very important to God. How important is it to us?

Principle #17 -- It DOES Make a Difference!

One individual recently said to a group of people, concerning the Passover celebration, "The one sure command we have is for the Passover. Do you do it on the 14th or 15th? You will have to answer in judgment from your understanding. But it does not appear to be the most 'weighty matter of the law!'"

Who says so?

Is the proper time and observance of Passover not a "weighty" matter to God? One is either right -- or wrong. There are not two "Passovers." God only ordained ONE. To fail to distinguish between right and wrong, the clean and unclean, in God's sight, is an abomination! To keep Passover on the wrong day would be like keeping the Sabbath on the wrong day! Those who desecrated God's Sabbath days, by observing false forgeries, like Sunday, or a false "Passover" a day early, or a false Sunday Pentecost, are guilty before God of profaning His Holy Days and sacrilege! God says, "**But the house of Israel REBELLED against me . . . they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments . . . and MY SABBATHS THEY GREATLY POLLUTED: then I said, I would pour out MY FURY upon them in the wilderness to consume them**" (Ezekiel 20:13).

Does Sabbath keeping matter? God commands: "**I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and HALLOW MY SABBATHS; and they shall be a SIGN between me and you, that ye may KNOW that I am the LORD your God**" (Ezekiel 20:19-20).

It does matter to Almighty GOD! It does make a difference what days we observe -- in the eyes of Almighty God!

Principle #18 -- Beware the "Least Commandment" Syndrome

How important is "obedience" to God? Some teachers are making "excuses" for people's disobedience. One writer goes so far as to say, ". . . we should become less fussy about difficult details of dates and times." He goes so far as to say, "Even though the Dead Sea scrolls and Jewish history show that controversies existed in regard to calendars and the keeping of holy days, the New Testament writers make *virtually no effort to try to clear up any of it*. There is not even a short section dedicated to 'how to count Pentecost' or something like that."

He goes on to say, "What do we believe we will be asked in the judgment? Will our first few questions be to explain the timing of the Passover in the Old and New Testaments? . . . Honestly, it is much easier for most people to learn and give a technical explanation of Passover, than it is to *do* all of the things mentioned above in a righteous manner" ("Passover in Perspective," by Norm Edwards, Bible Study Notes, 4/3/98).

Does any of this make sense? Should we become "less fussy" about the date and timing of the Passover, or the holy day of Pentecost?

GOD FORBID! God desires PERFECTION on the part of His people. He has given us NO EXCUSE! If it is so easy for most people to give a technical explanation of Passover, then there is NO EXCUSE FOR GETTING IT WRONG!

Furthermore, the reason New Testament writers made no effort to "clear up" controversies about the holy days and Jewish calendar during the first century is really very simple -- JESUS CHRIST SAID THE PHARISEES SAT IN MOSES' SEAT, and further, He said we are to DO AS "THEY BID YOU OBSERVE AND DO"! What could be CLEARER than that? That statement resolves ALL CONTROVERSIES about which calendar they

would be using, and WHICH Holy Days they would be keeping! It would have been those approved and sanctioned by the PHARISEES!

Therefore, I shudder to think of what God in heaven must think of this wishy-washy, compromising, willy-nilly paper on "Passover in Perspective," by Norm Edwards. What may seem so trivial and unimportant to *him* may be of enormous importance to GOD, showing the difference between the clean and the unclean, the pure and the defiled, the ones who are righteous, and the ones who are unrighteous!

Perhaps to some, like Norm Edwards, the Passover -- the first of God's annual Holy Days -- may "not appear to be the most 'weighty matter of the law!'"

But Almighty God thunders, "**For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts**" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Is the subject of true Passover observance not a "weighty matter of the law"? What could be weightier? It is a premier annual Holy Day of God, commanded to be observed FOREVER. It is the BEGINNING of the plan of God. It sets the pattern for all the Holy Days to follow. If we get it wrong, then we are screwed up *from the very beginning!*

The Passover, its correct observance, and understanding of its true meaning, is the KEY TO SALVATION! It is a terrible SIN to minimize it, belittle it, or denigrate it!

Herbert Armstrong used to say, "I will not bend one iota, I will not compromise one scintilla, of God's Law!" His attitude was right, even though his knowledge was less than perfect in many areas, including Holy Day observance.

To compromise with the TRUTH of God, which Jesus Christ said would make us 'FREE' (John 8:32), would be to submit to error, and to become *enslaved in SIN once again!* To carelessly reject truth is to follow Satan the devil, the father of liars (John 8:44). And the end result? *Death!* Death for ALL ETERNITY!

Does it really matter if we get Passover wrong, and observe it on the wrong day? Or Pentecost? Ignorance of the law is one thing; but careless, slothfulness, laziness, and unwillingness to "prove all things," is something else again!

The apostle James wrote, "**For whosoever shall keep the WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, he is guilty of ALL**" (James 2:10) -- that is, he is guilty of SIN! (I John 3:4).

And, Paul wrote plainly, "**The wages of SIN is DEATH**" (Romans 6:23).

Therefore, it sounds like it is very important in God's eyes that we strive to obey God and keep His commandments -- all of them -- rightly, and avoid all excuses for compromise and disobedience!

Jesus Christ said, concerning those who would minimize the commandments of God: **"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these *least commandments*, and shall teach men so, he shall be called *the least* in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall **DO AND TEACH THEM**, *the same shall be called GREAT in the kingdom of heaven. . .*" (Matt.5:19).**

Those who refuse to boldly teach GOD'S TRUTH -- who are AFRAID to stand up, and stand out, and who fear persecution for proclaiming the TRUTH of God without compromise, fear, or favor of men -- the same will answer to the judgment seat of Christ!

And those who think it doesn't really matter which days we observe, or keep, will also stand before the Judgment seat of God, to give account of themselves, and their lives, and their disobedience. What excuses will they have -- then?

Jesus Christ declared of that day, **"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH THE WILL of my Father which is in heaven"** (Matt.7:21). Isn't it the Father's will that we observe HIS annual holy days, that HE gave to mankind -- at the proper "appointed times"?

Jesus went further, and said, **"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wondrous works? And then will I profess unto them, *I never knew you: DEPART FROM ME, ye that work iniquity*"** (Matt.7:22-23).

Does it really matter? You bet it does! **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is SIN"** -- that is, **lawlessness** (James 4:17).

Does it really matter to YOU what day you observe Passover? or Pentecost? Or what days you keep?

Is it a "light thing" with you? Ahab thought it a **"light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam"** (I Kings 16:31), who changed the dates and observance of God's holy days (I Kings 12:32). Saul thought it but a "light thing" to keep the "good" cattle and sheep alive, even though God had said to kill everything. Is it a "light thing" to disobey the instructions of God?

What do YOU think?