

WHY SHOULD WE KEEP THE HOLY DAYS?

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Tomorrow is The Day of Pentecost ... one of God's Holy Days. Typically when we observe God's Holy Days ... we observe them "alone". Very few observe Unleavened Bread ... Trumpets ... Atonement (other than perhaps the Jews).

Tomorrow we'll have some company ... The Catholics ... The Anglicans and some others also observe Pentecost.

They count 50 days from Easter Sunday. We count 50 days from the Sunday which falls during the Unleavened Bread week. This year ... both dates are the same.

Mostly these other churches keep Pentecost because they see it as the "birth of the Christian Church". The Holy Spirit came as per Acts Chapter 2 ... the Church was "off and running". I suspect that most believers in those churches think Acts Chapter 2 was the very first Pentecost ever. Certainly I did.

But ... usually ... we don't have any company on God's Holy Days. Most keep Easter and Christmas. Older traditional churches keep Pentecost ... though modern Evangelical ... born-again churches don't.

So when we look around ... most Bible believers don't keep Bible Holy Days ... nor the weekly Sabbath.

Why not? Typically ... we're told that the Sabbath and the Holy Days we're all "done away". Nailed to the Cross of Jesus. Merely shadows ... no longer necessary now that we have the substance ... Jesus.

The Seventh Day Adventists (about 20 million worldwide) strongly support and teach the weekly Sabbath ... but even they dismiss the annual Holy Days as merely ceremonial laws ... no longer necessary any more than circumcision or animal sacrifices.

I think from time to time some of us occasionally wonder ourselves ... have we got it right? Are the Holy Days really for us today? Have we maybe got it wrong? Surely ... all of these other Bible-reading ... Bible-believing folk can't all be wrong?

So. Since we've got a Holy Day coming up tomorrow ... and it's all very topical ... I thought I'd do a whistle stop tour around the reasons why we do believe that the Holy Days are indeed for us today. As we'll see ... or hopefully see ... we've got vastly more scriptural support than anyone has for Sunday ... Christmas ... Easter ... or other Feast Days such as the Immaculate Conception or the Feast of Assumption.

I want to focus largely on the annual Holy Days ... but let's just do a very quick refresher on the weekly Sabbath. Other than the Seventh Day Adventists ... most churches lump them all together ... all gone ... all nailed to the Cross.

Exodus 20:8-11 (NKJV)

8 **"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (One of the Big 10!)**

9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

10 but **the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work:** you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

11 **For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (That's the longest of the commandments ... and very plain)**

Does anyone teach that we can ignore idolatry or murder or stealing? Are all of these commandments still applicable ... with the exception of the 4th ... the Sabbath? NB: This is "THE SABBATH OF THE LORD". And it goes back to Creation in Genesis Chapter 2. Long before any Jews ... Israelites ... Churches. Right back to the beginning ... we have The Sabbath Day. GOD BLESSED IT WAY BACK THEN.

Even before Sinai ... God had covered the importance of the Sabbath Day when providing manna on 6 days of the week. No manna on the Sabbath. Over 40 years they had that emphasised. This is one of the Ten Commandments written in stone by God Himself.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (NKJV)

13 **"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on *My holy day*,
And call *the Sabbath a delight*,
The holy day of the Lord honourable,**

And shall **honour Him**, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking your own words,

14 **Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord;
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.**

The mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Seven hundred years after Sinai ... no change. God's Holy Day. Who can make any other day Holy? Can man ... or any church ... make Wednesday or Friday or Sunday ... Holy?

Keeping the Sabbath Holy ... Honours God ... the #1 commandment.

Mark 2:23-28 (NKJV)

23 Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on **the Sabbath**; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain.

24 And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" **(It was perfectly lawful)**

25 But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him:

26 how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?"

27 And He said to them, "**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**

28 **Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.**"

The Sabbath was made for all mankind ... not the Jew or Israelite.

Jesus is the Lord of The Sabbath (not "was" Lord). This is the only scriptural reference to any day of the week being the "Lord's Day".

We can continue to go through the New Testament ... but there's no scripture anywhere that says the Sabbath is no longer to be kept ... none (why should there be? ... what's wrong with it?). No scripture anywhere that says that any other day replaces the Sabbath ... and should be kept. Even Catholics admit that.

James Cardinal Gibbons: Faith of Our Fathers: (the 2nd American to be made a Cardinal) wrote: "***You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will not find a single line authorising the sanctification of Sunday. The scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctified***".

The Catholic Universe Bulletin (1942): "***The Catholic Church changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday by right of the Divine, Infallible authority given to Her by Her Founder, Jesus Christ. The Protestant claiming the Bible to be the only guide to faith, has no warrant for observing Sunday***".

It is obvious as you go through the New Testament that the Sabbath continues to be observed ... as it always had been (but probably better). In the Old Testament they were rebellious and stiff-necked and wouldn't honour God. The New Testament Church kept it much more properly.

Acts 13:14-16 (NKJV)

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and **went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.**

15 And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, **(the Jews)** and **you who fear God, (God-fearers ... Gentiles)** listen:

There was nothing special about preaching on the Sabbath ... it was natural and predictable ... if you were a Sabbath keeper. Nothing had changed.

Acts 13:40-48 (NKJV)

40 Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

41 'Behold, you despisers,
Marvel and perish!

For I work a work in your days,
A work which you will by no means believe,
Though one were to declare it to you.' "

42 **So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.**

43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 **On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.**

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so the Lord has commanded us:
'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles,

That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' ”
48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Paul's sermon ends and the Gentiles are filled with excitement and want to hear more on the next Sabbath. Natural and predictable! No change! Paul doesn't offer to see them the following day ... Sunday ... as it's now the day we Christians keep! They all wait until the next Sabbath.

Acts 16:11-15 (NKJV)

11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,
12 and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

13 **And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made;** and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

14 **Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us.** She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. **The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.**

15 And when **she and her household were baptised**, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

All very straightforward. All very natural. They're preaching on the Sabbath ... people hear the truth and baptisms take place ... there was a church group.

Again ... nothing "special" about the reference to the Sabbath.
That's the point!! It's natural!

And so it goes. The Sabbath is mentioned over 60 times in the New Testament. There is no hint ... not one ... of its being "done away".

If it was to be replaced by Sunday ... wouldn't we need some scriptural support? It would be a major change ... one of the 10 commandments ... God's Holy Day ... so surely a few ... clear ... unambiguous scriptures?

"Sunday" doesn't appear in the New Testament ... but the term "First Day of The Week" appears 8 times. So ... presumably ... one or more of those 8 places should tell us clearly of this major change in God's definition of Holy Time?

There are clear explanations about changes in circumcision and animal sacrifices. So ... surely there would be clear guidance about changing one of the commandments ... the day of worship for Christians ... if it is different?

So ... if "Sunday/1st Day of The Week" is mentioned 8 times ... what do they show us?

Six of these are just the story of Jesus' Resurrection and how He appeared to various people on that Sunday. No reference to being special evermore.

That leaves only 2 other passages.

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also:

2 **On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.**

3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.

4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

This verse tells the brethren to STORE SOMETHING FOR THE SAINTS IN JERUSALEM. There is nothing about any formal church service??

1 Corinthians 16:2 (WEYMOUTH)

2 On the first day of every week let each of you put on one side and store up at his home whatever gain has been granted to him;

So that's 7 of the 8 places.

Acts 20:6-12 (NKJV)

6 But **we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread**, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

7 **Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.**

8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.

12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Verse 7. Is this a formal command to all believers? Does it clearly state that the Sabbath is no longer God's Holy Day? And Sunday?

In context ... Paul ... their Apostle ... was leaving the area. This was the last chance to get together.

It seems to be an evening meeting ... Paul "continued to midnight and then on to daybreak" (!). This was probably a Saturday evening meeting (as the days start at sunset).

Acts 20:7 (GNB)

Paul's Last Visit to Troas

7 On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship meal.

That's it. They had probably kept the Sabbath and as Paul was leaving ... they continued on with a fellowship meal.

No other references to Sunday.

As **Cardinal Gibbons said: "Nowhere from Genesis to Revelation is there any scriptural support for Sunday"**.
The Bible only supports the Sabbath.

So ... as far as The Sabbath is concerned ... you and I are on immensely strong ground!

But what about the Holy Days? Maybe the Sabbath is clear ... but the Seventh Day Adventists vigorously uphold the Sabbath yet dismiss the Holy Days. They teach that the Holy Days are part of the Ceremonial Law and are no more applicable today than the animal sacrifices ... washings ... etc.

(In practice ... some Seventh Day Adventists do keep the Holy Days. Dr Samuele Bachiochi ... one of their best-known and top scholars ... accepted them late in his life. He was disfellowshipped as a consequence.)

Joe Tkach taught that they were part of the Old Covenant at Sinai ... and not binding on New Covenant believers. Most churches see it that way.

Let's have a look.

Exodus 12:3-8 (NKJV)

3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: "On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.

4 And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb.

5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

6 Now **you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.**

7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

8 **Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. (Passover)**

Exodus 12:14-16 (NKJV)

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.**

15 **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.** On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

16 **On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you.** No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. **(Keep Unleavened Bread for 7 days)**

Exodus 12:24-27 (NKJV)

24 And **you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons forever.** *(The Passover kept "for ever")*

25 It will come to pass when you come to the land which the Lord will give you, just as He promised, that **you shall keep this service.**

26 And it shall be, when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?'

27 that you shall say, **'It is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord,** who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our households.' " So the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

When were these two institutions given to Israel? While they were in Egypt! Well before the Old Covenant. Not dependant on it. When the Old Covenant ends it doesn't affect these days ... they were in existence before then.

We know that the Passover pictures the sacrifice and death of the Lord Jesus. It would seem unlikely it would ever pass away? Unleavened Bread pictures the putting away of sin and having a right lifestyle. It seems unlikely that would ever pass away either? Aren't they still relevant?

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NKJV)

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed **Christ, our Passover**, was sacrificed for us.

8 **Therefore let us keep the feast**, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. **[(NET) "let us celebrate the festival"]**

Paul is writing to a Gentile Church (50 miles west of Athens) ... about 56 AD.

No big fuss ... but just as you would expect ... keeping the Passover and Unleavened Bread is normal ... but Paul points towards Jesus as the heart of it. So ... a fairly strong reference to Passover and Unleavened Bread still being kept ... but now ... by the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 11:23-30 (NKJV)

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that **the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;**

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

25 **In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My**

blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For **he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.**

30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. (are prematurely dead)

Bread and wine picturing the Lord's death ... Passover.

Do it properly! Think about it! Examine yourselves ahead of time. But ... DO IT!

Gentiles keeping these days ... in 56 AD.

Acts 20:6 (NKJV)

6 But **we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread**, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

It doesn't absolutely prove that they kept Unleavened Bread ... but ... Luke is writing somewhere in the early 60s ... about events in the early 50s ... to Theophilus ... who is probably a Gentile.

If Theophilus didn't observe the Holy Days ... it would be meaningless ... a mystery to him.

How could Luke ... writing 10 years later ... remember the timing of their visit to Philippi ... other than he probably remembers the highlight of keeping Unleavened Bread with the brethren there.

If everybody stopped keeping the Holy Days decades earlier ... this would be an irrelevant and confusing reference.

But ... if believers are still keeping the Bible Holy Days ... this is a very natural and helpful reference. **We** know what time of year it refers to. But ... most church-going folk wouldn't!

Acts 20:13-16 (NKJV)

13 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

15 We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

16 **For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.**

Pentecost 54 AD. Paul was hurrying to keep Pentecost in Jerusalem.

Luke doesn't imply anything unusual about this. Just a natural part of the narrative that Paul is keeping Pentecost (as well as Passover and Unleavened Bread as we've already seen). This is what you'd expect.

1 Corinthians 16:5-8 (NKJV)

5 Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia).

6 And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go.

7 For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.

8 **But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.**

This was written to largely a Gentile Church in 56 AD.

It's all very natural and helpful for people who know the Holy Days and keep them.

Acts 18:19-21 (NKJV)

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent,

21 but took leave of them, saying, "**I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem**"; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

"This coming Feast in Jerusalem"? Which Feast? Christmas? Easter? It doesn't identify it explicitly. It seems to have been important for Paul to make it to Jerusalem to keep it with the main congregation there.

Though not stated explicitly ... if you pick up the timing some chapters earlier ... and follow Paul's journey and chronology ... this coming Feast appears to be in the autumn of 52 AD (see Lesson 38 of the old Ambassador Bible Correspondence Course).

So ... it is most likely ... the Feast of Tabernacles. Paul probably wouldn't put effort out for a single day ... Trumpets ... Atonement ... but it would be worth the effort for an 8 day festival (or even all of the autumn Holy Days if he could get there in time).

The Feast of Tabernacles is the big Feast in the autumn. Worthwhile Paul pushing himself to be there.

Acts 27:9-10 (NKJV)

9 Now when much time had been spent, and **sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over**, Paul advised them,

10 saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

Paul was being taken to Rome by ship.

Luke explains to Theophilus that it was a bad time of year to be sailing ... since "the Fast" was already past. What's the Fast? A reference to the Day of Atonement.

If you wrote a letter today to a relative ... or a co-worker ... and mentioned that you'd be visiting them shortly after "The Fast" ... odds are that they'd have no idea what/when you're talking about! "Fast"? When is that?

But ... for church-people ... for Holy Day keeping people ... it's a useful milestone. It's the sort of casual reference you use if you're a Holy Day keeper.

As you read the New Testament ... you come across these casual informal references time and again. That is exactly what you'd expect if the people are continuing to keep the holy Days. And there are no other alternatives in scripture ... no Sundays ... Christmas's ... Easters ... Lents ... Halloweens. Nothing!

So ... although in a small minority of people ... we're in good company! Jesus ... Paul ... Luke ... the Corinthians ... Ephesians ... Theophilus ... all of us ... still honouring God on His Holy Days.

We know there are good reasons for keeping the Holy Days. They are a blueprint of God's Plan of Salvation ... how ultimately we'll come into God's Family.

Passover ... Jesus' sacrifice and death for us
Unleavened Bread ... righteous living and putting sin away
Pentecost ... Holy Spirit empowering the Firstfruits Harvest
Trumpets ... Jesus' return and beginning of the Kingdom
Atonement ... man at one with God; satan gone
Tabernacles ... 1,000 years of God's Kingdom
Last Great Day ... opportunity for the rest of mankind to enter God's family and live eternally

Why would we ever want not to keep these days?

Even some Protestant TV Evangelists/teachers can see this.

John Hagee (Cornerstone Church in San Antonio): ***"Leviticus 23 is one of the key chapters to unlocking the Prophetic Mysteries of The Bible. The 7 Feasts found in Leviticus 23 give us a Divine Blueprint for the future of the world. Christians falsely assume these Feasts are exclusively Jewish Feasts ... the New Testament Church celebrated the 7 Feasts. The 7 Feasts reveal God's 7,000 year plan for man"***.

John Hagee admits that the New Testament Church kept the Feast Days (and we've just seen that). He even points out they're not Old Testament days which are "done away" ... but actually keys to understanding yet-future prophecy.

So. We've got real ... solid ... Biblical reasons for continuing to keep the Sabbaths and the Holy Days. Most other churches have got nothing other than tradition.

Zechariah 14:3-4 (NKJV)

3 Then the Lord will go forth
And fight against those nations,
As He fights in the day of battle.
4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,
Which faces Jerusalem on the east.
And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two,
From east to west,
Making a very large valley;
Half of the mountain shall move toward the north
And half of it toward the south.

Zechariah 14:9 (NKJV)

9 **And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.**
In that day it shall be—
"The Lord is one,"
And His name one.

Zechariah 14:16-19 (NKJV)

16 **And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.**

17 And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.

18 If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

19 **This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.**

The Feast of Tabernacles being kept in the Millennium! And all of the Holy Days ... one imagines.

So you and I should be very confident and encouraged that by keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days we are completely in agreement with God's inspired Word.