

IS THAT IN THE BIBLE?



MAN'S HOLIDAYS AND GOD'S HOLY DAYS

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Introduction

Have you ever questioned the source of your beliefs? Do you base your beliefs on family or societal traditions, or do you base them on sound biblical doctrine? Do you know what the Bible teaches in regard to the beliefs you hold dear? Is it possible that you believe something that the Bible does not teach, or that you actually *reject* what the Bible does teach? Is it possible that you are deceived?

The Bible tells us that *the whole world is deceived* (Revelation 12:9).

And so, it should come as no surprise that many of man's beliefs, customs, ideas and teachings are not based on God's Word, the Bible, but, instead, on human concepts and traditions, which actually have their roots in the "god of this world"—Satan the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4, *Authorized Version*). There is no truth in Satan, and even though he masquerades himself as an "angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14), God calls him and his demons "the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Ephesians 6:12).

Satan is presently the "ruler of this world." Unfortunately, he has not been a good and righteous ruler. Just the opposite! He has **suppressed the truth**, and has *blinded and deceived mankind* through his wrong philosophies and religions—in fact, from the very beginning of mankind's existence.

Are you blinded and deceived? Are you willing to become "undeceived?" If so, keep reading.

In this first booklet in a series called, "Is That In the Bible?," we will discuss the holidays of man and the Holy Days of God. We will show which days we are instructed to keep and which days we are instructed to reject—or, which we might be motivated to reject—presenting biblical proof so that you will no longer be deceived by Satan, the present, temporary god of this world.

Chapter 1 Man's Holidays...

The list of holidays that have been created by man is endless, and the celebratory practices vary widely in different countries and cultures. While we do not have the time nor space to review all of man's holidays—it seems that the world itself might not be able to contain the books that would have to be written—we will discuss some of the more prevalent and widely celebrated ones known among professing Christian societies. The same *principles* can then be applied to other holidays invented by man that are not covered in this booklet.

Easter

Easter is a holiday that purports to celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Is this truth or fiction? Would you be shocked to learn that Easter is NEITHER Christian, nor does it memorialize the death and resurrection of our Savior?

We will show you that Christ was neither crucified on a Friday, nor was He resurrected on a Sunday. If He had been, He would not be our Savior, as He would not have fulfilled the *ONLY SIGN* that HE gave for His Messiahship—that of being dead and buried in the heart of the earth for *three days and three nights* (Matthew 12:38–40). The period from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning, traditionally accepted by most professing Christians, simply does NOT constitute 72 hours! Some claim that “three days and three nights” only refer to parts of the day and night. However, Jesus defined the daylight portion as including 12 hours (John 11:9), distinguishing, in John 11:10, the “night” from the day. Therefore, “three days and three nights” clearly refer to 72 hours.

[As the above example shows, when interpreting Scripture, a cardinal rule is that one must read Scripture in context with, and in addition to, other relevant Scripture, particularly in the case of hard-to-understand passages or where one passage *appears* to contradict another passage. The Bible never contradicts itself, compare John 10:35.]

The truth is, Christ was crucified and buried late on Wednesday and was then resurrected late on Saturday, just before sunset—the REAL 72-hour period of three days and three nights referred to in Matthew 12.

Christ Not Resurrected on Easter Sunday

We read in Matthew 28:1–6 (*Authorized Version*): “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it... And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was

crucified. He is not here: for HE IS RISEN, AS HE SAID.”

We note from this passage that Christ was **already resurrected** by the time the women came to the grave. We are told that they appeared “in the **end of the Sabbath**, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.” Many commentaries point out that this phrase discusses the END of the SABBATH, that is, Saturday evening or late afternoon, and NOT Sunday morning. *The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament* renders this verse in this way: “Now late on Sabbath, as it was getting dusk toward (the) first (day) of (the) week, came Mary the Magdalene...”

A.T. Robertson’s *Harmony of the Gospel* comments: “This phrase once gave much trouble, but the usage of the vernacular Koine Greek amply justifies the translation. The visit of the women to inspect the tomb was thus made before the Sabbath was over (before 6 p.m. on Saturday).”

Cockrell, “*Three Days and Three Nights*,” states: “When does the Bible say that Jesus rose from the dead? The two Marys came to the tomb ‘in the end of the sabbath’ ([Matthew] 28:1). The Sabbath always ended at sunset: ‘From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath’ (Lev. 23:32). Then they went to the tomb before sunset on Saturday. Jesus had risen from the dead before their arrival ([Matthew] 28:1–8)...”

The *Elberfelder Bible* reads: “But late at the Sabbath, in the dawn of the first day.” It comments: “Days started at sunset.” (See discussion below.)

The revised *Zürcher Bible* of 1942 states: “After the Sabbath, when it was shining (lightening up) towards the first day of the week...” It adds the following comments: “For the Jews a day began with sunset. The expression [in] Luke 23:54, ‘The Sabbath lightened up...’ [The *Authorized Version* states: “The Sabbath drew on” or “drew near”] does not mean that the morning began, but that lights were kindled for the evening...”

Other passages confirm that Christ was resurrected long before Sunday morning. We read that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb on the first day of the week, when it was still dark, and Jesus was already resurrected by that time (John 20:1). This means that Christ was not resurrected on Sunday morning, at sunrise, but that He *had*

already been resurrected “while it was still dark.”

Therefore, the concept that we must honor Christ’s resurrection on Easter Sunday is biblically unfounded.

Christ Not Crucified on Good Friday

Just as Easter Sunday celebrations are unbiblical, so also are Good Friday celebrations, because Christ was neither resurrected on Sunday, nor was He crucified on Friday. The day Christ was crucified was actually on *Wednesday*.

Cockrell, “*Three Days and Three Nights*,” points out: “According to the Bible, Jesus Christ arose before sunset on Saturday... Having shown from Matthew 28:1 that Jesus rose from the grave as the Sabbath ended at sunset and the first day of the week began, this would put the crucifixion on Wednesday at sunset... According to the gospel writers, Jesus died at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m. our time) and was buried about sunset that same day... If Jesus was buried at sunset on Wednesday and arose at sunset on Saturday, He fulfilled the sign of Jonah [compare Matthew 12:38–40]. He would have been in the grave Wednesday night, Thursday night, and Friday night—a full ‘three nights.’ He would have been in the grave during the daylight of Thursday, Friday and Saturday—a full ‘three days.’ All together a full ‘three days and three nights.’ Thus we have a literal fulfillment of the words of Christ in Matthew 12:40.”

Numerous commentators have confirmed and agree with the historical and biblical fact that Jesus Christ died and was buried on a WEDNESDAY. Please note the following selection:

Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Eternity*, June 1958: “... ancient Christian traditions, attested to by the Didascalia Apostolorum as well as by Epiphanius and Victorinus of Petau (who died in 304 A.D.), [give] Tuesday evening as the date of the Last Supper and prescribes a fast for Wednesday to commemorate the capture [and subsequent trial and crucifixion] of Christ.”

W.L. Pettingill, *Bible Questions Answered*, p. 182: “To us it is perfectly obvious that crucifixion was on Wednesday.”

Finis Dake, *Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible*, page 13, note on Matthew 12:40: “Christ was dead for three full days and three full nights. He was put in the grave Wednesday just before sunset and

was resurrected at the end of Saturday at sunset.”

R. A. Torrey, *Difficulties and Alleged Errors and Contradictions in the Bible*, 1907, pp. 104–109: “... the day on which Jesus Christ was crucified was Wednesday... everything in Scripture is perfectly harmonized by Wednesday crucifixion.”

James A. Walther, *The Chronology of Passion Week*, in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, June 1958: “References in the Didascalia, in Epiphanius, in Victorinus of Petau... support the Tuesday [night] Passover dating and the subsequent arrest of Jesus in the morning hours of Wednesday.”

Finally, the *Companion Bible*, published by Oxford University Press, explains in its Appendix 156 that Christ was crucified on a Wednesday.

Also of interest is the prophecy in Daniel 9:27 that the Messiah would be killed “*in the middle of the week*; i.e., on a *Wednesday*, and that by His death, He would “bring an end to sacrifice and offering.”

How, then, are we to understand John 19:30–42, which says that Christ was crucified on the “preparation day before the Sabbath,” that is, on Friday?

A careful review of this passage provides the answer. We read: “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. Therefore, because it was THE PREPARATION DAY that the bodies should not remain on the cross ON THE SABBATH (FOR **THAT SABBATH WAS A HIGH DAY**), the Jews asked Pilate... that they might be taken away... After this, Joseph of Arimathea... asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus... So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus... also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus and bound it in strips of linen with the spices... Now in the place where He was crucified there was... a new tomb... So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ PREPARATION DAY, for the tomb was NEARBY” (verses 30–31, 38–42).

We will focus here on the meaning of the “preparation day.” Some claim that the “preparation day” in this Scripture refers to the day *before the weekly Sabbath*, and so they teach that Christ was crucified on Friday.

Those who claim that the preparation day refers *only* to the day before the *weekly* Sabbath overlook the fact that the word “Sabbath” can refer to the weekly Sabbath, as well as to any of the seven annual Holy Days, which are also called Sabbaths in the Bible (compare Leviticus 16:29–31; 23:24, 26–32, 34–35, 39). Annual Sabbaths can fall on any day in a given week. The *Elberfelder* Bible admits that a biblical reference to “the preparation day” can apply to the day before the *weekly* Sabbath OR the day before an *annual* Sabbath or Holy Day, stating that the preparation day mentioned in John 19:31 was “a weekday before the [weekly] Sabbath or [an annual] Festival.”

However, the reference in John 19:31 is to the preparation day of an *annual* Holy Day or Festival—the First Day of Unleavened Bread—NOT of the *weekly* Sabbath. The Bible says in John 19:31 that “that” particular Sabbath was a “high day”—an annual Holy Day. In the crucifixion year, that particular annual Holy Day or HIGH Sabbath fell on Thursday.

It is abundantly clear from the Bible, as well as historical records, that Jesus Christ was not crucified on “Good Friday” and resurrected on “Easter Sunday.” For further proof, please read our free booklet, “*Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery.*”

Origin of Easter and Easter Customs

What about Easter and its customs? Where did this celebration come from? And how did it come to be associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

“Easter” is the name of the pagan goddess of Spring who was worshipped under the names “Eastre,” “Eostre,” “Astarte,” “Ostara,” “Ishtar” and “Istar.” It is from these names that our modern word “Easter” is derived. Especially the name “Ishtar” is associated with the Babylonian “Queen of Heaven.” The egg-laying Easter hare or Easter rabbit and colored Easter eggs were associated—as symbols of fertility—with Eastre, the pagan goddess of Spring.

In addition, the pagans celebrated, at Easter time, the passion and resurrection of *pagan gods* who *died on a Friday* and *came to life again on the following Sunday*. Some of these gods are known as Marduk, Attis and Mythra.

Arthur Weigall writes in “*The Paganism in our Christianity*”: “The

clergy... could not prevent the people in various countries celebrating the great holiday at Easter in honor of the resurrection of Attis and other gods.”

“The Women’s Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets” has this to say about “Attis”: “Attis’ passion was celebrated on the 25th of March, exactly nine months before the festival of his birth, the 25th of December... The day of Attis’ death was *black Friday*... The god died and was buried. He descended into the underworld. On the third day [a Sunday] he rose again from the dead.”

Have you ever wondered why it is commonly believed—contrary to the Bible—that Christ died on Friday and rose on Sunday? Here you have the answer! It is clearly derived from the worship of the pagan god, Attis.

Note that the early Church did not keep Easter. *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, Vol. 8, p. 828, confirms that “there is no indication of the observance of the Easter Festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic fathers.”

Arthur Weigal and other historians confirm that the Catholic Church adopted pagan festivals, such as Easter, “to Christian ideas,” rather than suppressing them. Calvin, for example, considered the annual church festival of Easter to be so paganized, that at one point, he did not observe it either.

Many Scriptures command us not to worship the one true God in the way of the pagans. The Bible also specifically condemns the worship of the “queen of heaven” in Jeremiah 7:18 and other places. The *Ryrie Study Bible* identifies the queen of heaven with the “Assyro-Babylonian goddess Ishtar”—in other words, with Easter.

Jeremiah 10:2 tells us: “Do not learn the way of the Gentiles.” *Lamsa* states in an annotation that the word “way” describes “religion.” Note, too, that true religion is referred to as the “Way” (compare Acts 9:2). Deuteronomy 12:29–32 commands us not to “inquire after their [that is, pagan] gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way.” The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments: “The Israelites were not even to inquire about the worship of the Canaanites, lest they be tempted to incorporate aspects of it into their worship of God.”

It is, therefore, abundantly clear from both biblical and historical records that true Christians are not to participate in Easter celebrations. It is pagan, and it cannot be Christianized.

Christmas

Many people think they celebrate the birth of Christ on December 25, but Christ was not born on December 25, nor could He have been born then, or anywhere near that date. What proof can we offer?

Christ Not Born on December 25

The fact that shepherds were living out in the fields (compare Luke 2:8), and that a public enrollment was conducted at the time of Christ's birth (compare Luke 2:1-7), *clearly proves* that Christ could not have been born anywhere near December 25. Sheep were never in the field during the winter months. From the middle of October until the middle of March, the sheep would be kept inside stables or barns. During that time, there was too much rain and wind, and even frost and snow.

The newspaper *Wynne Progress* published an article on December 21, 1967, entitled, "*The Christmas Story*," in which it pointed out numerous discrepancies between the biblical record and Christmas traditions. It stated, "As for the date of December 25, that was chosen by the church during the fourth Century A.D... The choice seems to have been dictated... by a desire to Christianize the Roman revel that marked the winter solstice. *The biblical evidence plainly indicates that Jesus was born during the late summer or early fall.* That is the time of year when Palestinian shepherds take their flocks into the field to graze at night."

The Archbishop of Canterbury said that the Christmas story of the "Three Wise Men" was nothing but a "legend." The British *Daily Telegraph* reported on December 20, 2007: "Dr Rowan Williams has claimed that there was certainly nothing to prove there were three of them [the Magis] or that they were kings. He said the only reference to the wise men from the East was in Matthew's gospel and the details were very vague. Dr Williams said: 'Matthew's gospel says they are astrologers, wise men, priests from somewhere outside the Roman Empire, that's all we're really told. It works quite well as legend.'

"The Archbishop went on to dispel other details of the Christmas story, adding that there were probably no asses or oxen in the stable. He also argued that Christmas cards which showed the Virgin Mary

cradling the baby Jesus, flanked by shepherds and wise men, were misleading. As for the scenes that depicted snow falling in Bethlehem, the Archbishop said the chance of this was ‘very unlikely’. He added that Jesus was probably not born in December at all. He said: ‘Christmas was when it was because it fitted well with the winter festival.’”

Christmas Celebrations Long Before Christ

Christmas celebrations took place *long before the birth of Christ*. The purpose of the celebrations was to honor pagan deities, such as the Persian sun god Mithras, who was born on December 25.

The German magazine, *P.M.*, published an article several years ago, entitled, “Can You Imagine to Believe in Mithras?” In the article it was stated:

“Mithras is the name of that transcendent being from whom they expect salvation. And each year in the winter they celebrate his birthday: in the night of December 25 with a sort of service, which we could call today midnight mass... The birthday of Jesus was declared [by Emperor Constantine and the Council of Nice in 325A.D.] to be on the same day on which Mithras was supposedly born... Until then, Christians had not celebrated Christmas.”

In fact, early Christians refused to celebrate Christmas, as they considered it to be a pagan feast. *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Vol. 3, explains: “The celebration of Christmas on December 25 in the church begins only in the middle of the 4th century. Until then, the opposition against it was in some cases very severe..., since it was considered a pagan custom to celebrate with festivities the birthdays of kings.”

Christmas carols, Christmas gifts, Christmas candles and Christmas cakes, as well as the Christmas tree, are all of pagan origin, and had been used to worship pagan gods and goddesses. Please notice the following in regard to the Christmas tree:

Jeremiah 10:2–5 reads: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Do not learn the way [Note in the *Lamsa Bible*: ‘Religion’] of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile; for one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the ax.

They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and hammers so that it will not topple. They are upright, like a palm tree, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot go themselves. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, nor can they do any good.”

Here we find a description of the Christmas tree. Some have said that Jeremiah 10 only talks about a wooden idol that was carved out of a tree, but that it does not refer to decorating a Christmas tree, per se. However, the pagans believed that their gods—Attis, Osiris, Dinosus—lived as tree spirits in pine trees. They believed that their gods actually changed into those trees, and they carried these sacred trees to a certain place of worship, decorated them, and adored them as deities.

Jeremiah 10 condemns any kind of religious worship that includes the decoration of a pine tree or a “green tree” (1 Kings 14:23), as well as the religious doctrines associated with such customs. *Lamsa* continues Jeremiah 10:8 as follows: “But altogether the vain doctrines of wooden image worship shall be utterly destroyed and consumed.”

Gradually, the Roman Catholic Church “adapted” those pagan customs to make the Christian faith more attractive to Gentiles. Quoting from Earl W. Count, *4000 Years of Christmas*: “The [Roman Catholic] Church finally succeeded in taking the merriment, the greenery, the lights, and the gifts from Saturn [a Roman sun god patterned after the Persian sun god Mithras] and giving them to the Babe of Bethlehem.”

The age-old question is, however, why is it so important to know that Christmas and its customs were a pagan invention? What is wrong with “Christianizing” those pagan customs? We might not be able to bring Christ BACK into those customs (as He was never part of them in the first place), but why can’t we bring those customs to Christ and use them to worship Him in that way?

Simply, because the Bible prohibits us from doing so. The concept of adding pagan practices to godly worship, known as “syncretism,” is condemned throughout Scripture.

In short, we read God’s command to Israel in Deuteronomy 12:29–32, as quoted before, that “you do not inquire after their [pagan] gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also

will do likewise.’ You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way...”

What could be clearer? God *commands* us NOT to worship Him in the way the Gentiles worshipped their gods. Christmas was a pagan festival in honor of pagan gods. God FORBIDS us to worship Him in that way. We read in Matthew 15:7–9 that we worship Christ IN VAIN when we teach “as doctrines the commandments of men” or pagans.

For further proof that true Christians are not to participate in Christmas celebrations, please read our free booklet, “***Don’t Keep Christmas.***”

Halloween

The Bible is very clear that a true Christian must not, under any circumstances, celebrate Halloween.

Halloween is deeply rooted in pagan and occult worship services and ceremonies. It was later “adopted” by the Catholic Church, which gave it a “Christian” mantle. However, its Satanic and demonic rites remain and are evidenced even in today’s Halloween customs.

The Encyclopedia Britannica, 1959, has this to say about “Halloween”:

“...the occasion shows clear connections with the religion of the Druids in pre-Christian Ireland and Scotland. The Celtic year ended on October 31, the eve of Samhain, and was celebrated with both religious and agrarian rites. For the Druids, Samhain was both the ‘end of summer’ and a festival of the dead. The spirits of the departed were believed to visit their kinsmen in search of warmth and good cheer as winter approached... Divination and auguries for the new year were practiced at Samhain. These magical practices concerned such questions as [to] who would die during the next year... It was also an occasion when fairies, witches and goblins terrified the populace...”

“THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE [CATHOLIC] CHURCH SOUGHT TO ELIMINATE OR SUPPLANT THE DRUID FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD BY INTRODUCING THE ALTERNATIVE OBSERVANCE OF ALL SAINTS’ DAY ON NOVEMBER 1. This feast was established to honor all saints, known or unknown, BUT IT FAILED TO DISPLACE THE PAGAN CELEBRATION OF SAMHAIN... By the end of the middle ages, the celebration of Allhallows [sic] Eve was an established part of the annual calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. However, after the Reformation, Protestants REJECTED this feast ALONG WITH OTHER IMPORTANT ONES SUCH AS CHRISTMAS AND EASTER.”

Other sources point out that Halloween was not celebrated in the United States until about 1845 when thousands of Irish emigrants flooded into New York. Today, it is said to be the “second highest grossing money maker” in the United States outside Christmas.

We are told by historians that there is a clear historical relationship between the Celtic concepts of resurrection, Roman Catholic responses to it, and the modern American holiday of Halloween.

We are also told that the Celts and their Druids believed that on October 31, the night before their New Year, the “Lord of the Death” gathered the souls of the evil dead, and that ghosts, evil spirits and witches roamed about. In order to honor the Sun God (Belenus), and to frighten away the evil spirits, large bonfires were lit. It was also believed that Samhain was a time when the division between the two worlds became very thin, when hostile supernatural forces were active and ghosts and spirits were free to wander as they wished. Samhain was the supreme night of demon celebrations. Spirits of the dead were believed to rise out of their graves, trying to return to the homes where they formerly lived. Frightened villagers tried to appease them by offering them gifts of fruit and nuts. This is the origin of the present day “trick-or-treat.”

Masks were worn to hide oneself from the spirits of the dead, or to frighten demons and scare them away. This constitutes the origin of today’s custom on Halloween to masquerade as devils, imps, ogres, and other demonic creatures. As the “Plymouth District Library” states, “When Christianity came to the British Isles, it became the eve of All Hallows [sic] or All Saints’ Day, but the old traditions remained. That’s why youngsters wear masks when they go out trick-or-treating and it is also why the hollowed-out jack-o’-lantern has a [mask-like] face.”

We are also informed that “jack-o’-lantern,” the festival light for Halloween, is the ancient symbol of a damned soul. Originally the Irish carved out turnips or beets as lanterns as representations of the souls of the dead or of goblins freed from the dead. When the Irish emigrated to America, they found an abundance of pumpkins to substitute the hard-to-find turnips. They began to cut pumpkins with faces representing demons, which were originally intended to frighten away evil spirits. Additional popular symbols of Halloween are bats, owls and black cats. They were originally feared because people believed that these creatures could communicate with the spirits of the dead, or that witches could turn themselves into them, especially black cats.

Considering the origin of Halloween and its customs, who can deny, as one Christian author wrote, “that virtually all of the symbols of Halloween are evil? Witches, monsters, ogres, vampires, ghosts, ghouls, goblins, devils and demons all portray evil... When America and the world celebrates the Festival of Samhain and the powers of darkness by masquerading as evil creatures or decorating our homes, schools, businesses and churches with occult symbols, Satanic power is glorified... When Christians participate in Halloween, it sends a message to children that witchcraft, demonism, Satanism, and the occult are something fun, entertaining and harmless... Some children develop a fascination with the supernatural which leads them later into more sinister occult practices... What’s wrong with Halloween? It does not have even one single redeeming virtue. It is a custom born out of pagan superstition. It is a demon-inspired, devil-glorifying, occult festival. It is an evening holy unto evil, death, and divination...”

The Bible, in fact, commands us to have nothing to do with the devil or his evil forces of darkness (compare 1 Thessalonians 5:21–22; Ephesians 5:10–12). Paul warns us that we must not attempt to partake of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21). We are also warned not to try to communicate with the dead (Deuteronomy 18:9–14). Witchcraft, in all of its different forms and variations, is abominable and sinful (1 Samuel 15:23; Galatians 5:20)!

Halloween is nothing else but a festival of, and for, the devil and his evil forces of darkness. True Christians must have no part in it!

New Year's Day

New Year's Day celebrations are linked to pagan customs and even demonic activities. Professor Philippe Walter's book, "Christianity—the Origins of a Pagan Religion," copyright 2003, 2006, makes several startling statements about the real origins of New Year's Day, as well as its customs.

Walter explains the pagan belief that, by the end of December, and on "New Year's Day" (January 1), "fairies... enter the homes of those who worship them... One must take pains to prepare the meal that should be offered to them in a clean and isolated room..."

A German magazine, *P.M.*, wrote the following about New Year's Day, and the customs associated with New Year's Day, in an article entitled, "*What is Special About New Year's?*":

"There is no objective reason, why January 1 is a better day for the new year than any other day. The Macedonians began the new year in the Autumn, and the ancient Greeks in the middle of the Summer, at a new moon.

"January 1 as the beginning of the new year goes back to Roman arbitrariness. Consul Fulvius Nobilior was prevented in 153 B.C., because of a war, to begin his rulership on March 15, which had been the day of the new year up until then. Therefore, the Consul transferred the day of the new year to January 1, which was more convenient for him.

"This date was accepted by Julius Caesar and has endured thanks to the Julian calendar, as it was favorable for new beginnings. After all, the double-faced Roman God Janus was the protector of the month of January. Pope Gregory XIII, who corrected the Julian Calendar for us, maintained January 1 as New Year's Day. But the Chinese and the Arabs still determine New Year's today by using the moon-calendar. And according to the Jews, their civil New Year—Rosh Ha-Shanah—is in September/October.

"The civil celebrations of New Year's took place for a long time on January 6, the [perceived] day of the [so-called] holy three kings.

"In 1742, a decree of the Pope transferred church celebrations of the new year to January 1; at the same time, this day was declared to be a fast day, in order to counteract the 'unchristian' actions

between the years. For between Christmas and January 6, the ghosts became active. When winter storms howled around the houses of the Germanic tribes, Wotan's [Wodan's] wild hunt was present—a frightening train of gods, demons and ghosts of the dead. ...

“These ghosts were driven away with big fires and cracks of whips. The ancients placed sacrificial offerings and gifts for the demons in front of their doors....

“Christianity could not eradicate those pagan customs. Quite to the contrary... The cracks of whips changed with the invention of black powder to fireworks...

“Why do we still have to drive away—symbolically—ghosts with mortar shots and rockets? Why do we still maintain those New Year's rites? Psychologists explain this with...the power of tradition, with superstition... This word reminds us of what is ‘standing above,’ what is ‘still there,’ what has endured from the pagan past and from the ancient fears of man.”

The article also explained that “Christian” celebrations in Munich, Germany, on New Year's Day are held with choirs and trumpets to “awake the new sun.”

Another source tells us that New Year's Day rituals included purgations, purifications, exorcisms, extinguishing and rekindling fires and masked processions. Often exorcisms and purgations were performed with much noise as if to scare away the evil spirits. In China, Ying, the forces of light, fought Yang, the forces of darkness, with cymbals, noisemakers and firecrackers.

It should be easily seen WHY it is wrong for TRUE Christians to participate in New Year's Day customs.

April Fool's Day

The origin and history of April Fool's Day [also spelled as "April Fools' Day"] or "All Fools' Day," are not entirely clear. Many explanations have been advanced to explain its origin.

Most commentaries and researchers maintain that the modern celebrations of the day developed in 1582, in France. As the most common story goes [even though some dispute this explanation, see discussion below], prior to that year, the new year was celebrated for eight days, beginning on March 25. The celebration culminated on April 1. With the reform of the calendar under Charles IX, the Gregorian Calendar was introduced, and New Year's Day was moved to January 1. In France, however, many people either refused to accept the new date, or did not learn about it, and continued to celebrate New Year's Day on April 1. Other people began to make fun of these traditionalists, sending them on "fools' errands" or trying to trick them into believing something false.

April Fool's Day was later introduced to the American colonies.

In Scotland, April Fool's Day is actually celebrated for two days. It is also known as "April Gowk," "Gowkie Day" or "Hunt the Gowk." "Gowk" is Scottish for "cuckoo"—an emblem of simpletons. The second day is also known as "Taily Day."

Mexico's counterpart of April Fool's Day is actually observed on December 28. In Portugal, April Fool's Day is celebrated on the Sunday and Monday prior to the Lenten Season, with the traditional trick being to throw flour at one's friends.

In spite of the "modern" origins of the day, many historians agree that the day has clearly ancient roots. We are told that ancient cultures, including those as varied as the Romans and the Hindus, celebrated New Year's Day on April 1. The Encyclopedia Britannica points out:

"What seems certain is that it is in some way or other a relic of those once universal festivities held at the vernal equinox, which, beginning on old New Year's Day, the 25th of March, ended on the 1st of April. This view gains support from the fact that the exact counterpart of April-fooling is found to have been an immemorial custom in India. The festival of the spring equinox is there termed

the feast of Huli, the last of which is the 31st of March, upon which the chief amusement is the befooling of people by sending them on and fruitless errands.”

Other sources tell us that throughout antiquity, numerous festivals included celebrations of foolery and trickery. One source, “April Fool’s Day: Early Roots,” gives the following noteworthy report:

“The Saturnalia, a Roman winter festival observed at the end of December, was the most important of these [celebrations of trickery]. It involved dancing, drinking, and general merrymaking. People exchanged gifts, slaves were allowed to pretend that they ruled their masters, and a mock king, the Saturnalicus princeps (or Lord of Misrule), reigned for the day. By the fourth century AD the Saturnalia had been transformed into January 1 New Year’s Day celebration, and many of its traditions were incorporated into the observance of Christmas...

“Northern Europeans observed an ancient festival to honor Lud, a Celtic god of humor. And there were also popular Northern European customs that made sport of the hierarchy of the Druids... During the Middle Ages, a number of celebrations developed which served as direct predecessors to April Fool’s Day. The most important of these was the Festus Fatuorum (the Feast of Fools) which evolved out of the Saturnalia. On this day (mostly observed in France) celebrants elected a mock pope and parodied church rituals. The church, of course, did its best to discourage this holiday, but it lingered on until the sixteenth century. Following the suppression of the Feast of Fools merrymakers focused their attention on Mardi Gras and Carnival.”

A German source, “*Faz.Net*,” points out that neither the Jews nor the Muslims participate in the custom of April Fool’s Day. *Tagesschau.de* wrote on April 1, 2002, that there are 800 theories regarding the origin of “April Fool’s Day,” and stated that the Catholic Church “has no problem” with its celebration.

Dr. Manfred Becker-Huberti explained: “Even though the first April prank has only been recorded in Germany in 1631, the custom seems to be much older. It can be found amongst all Indo-Germanic tribes... One possible origin can be found in the Roman feast of Quirinalia, or of the Indian feast of Huli, during which fools cast out winter and demons. The best explanation is that it derives from a

spring festival, like the German “Fastnacht” [“Fastnacht” is part of the German Carnival. The original “Fastnacht” was also celebrated for the purpose of casting out winter and demons]... In honor of [the Greek goddess] Venus, a feast of deception was celebrated in the spring. April 1 was her special day, and that is the reason why she was also called ‘Aprilis.’ The name of the Indian goddess of love, ‘Maja,’ has the meaning of ‘deception.’”

The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, by James Hastings, points out:

“The origin of the practice is obscure... it was widely prevalent at the close of the 16th century. It seems difficult, therefore, to accept the theory that it was due to the transference of New Year’s Day from the First of April to the First of January... The similarity of the fooling in India and the Celtic lands of Western Europe, taken together with affinities in religion and folklore..., points to a common origin in very early times... The First of April was kept in ancient Rome as the Feast of Venus and Fortuna Virilis... It is to some Celtic form of this worship of Venus on the First of April that the origin of All Fools’ Day must be traced... All Fools’ Day may therefore be the relic of a Spring Festival of Llew [a Sun-god of Celtic mythology].”

Even though the roots of April Fool’s Day may not be known precisely, the evidence strongly indicates that it is of pagan origin and that it was even celebrated as part of pagan worship services. We are told, however, in Jeremiah 10:2–3, that we are not to learn the ways of the Gentiles or “heathen” in the *Authorized Version*, as they are useless and in vain. In addition, God condemns foolish jesting in Ephesians 5:4, where we read, in the *Authorized Version*, that neither “foolish talking, nor jesting” should be named among us. The *New King James Bible* and the *Life Application Bible* clarify that the meaning is, “coarse jesting” or “coarse joking.”

We are admonished in God’s Word not to behave like “fools.” Proverbs 10:23 reads, in the *Authorized Version*: “It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom.”

An additional warning against participating in April Fool’s Day celebrations and activities can be found in Proverbs 26:18–19: “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, Is the man who deceives his neighbor, And says, ‘I was only joking!’”

Considering all the evidence of the origin of April Fool's Day available to us, as well as the very nature of the celebrations and activities accompanying that Day, we must conclude that true Christians should refrain from participating in it.

Valentine's Day

Centuries before Christ, the ancient Romans celebrated the evenings of February 14th and February 15th as an idolatrous and sensual festival in honor of Lupercus, the “hunter of wolves.” The Romans called the festival “Lupercalia.” In her book, *“Customs and Holidays Around the World,”* Lavinia Dobler states on page 172: “It was not until the reign of Pope Gelasius that the holiday became a ‘Christian custom.’ As far back as 496, Pope Gelasius changed Lupercalia on February 15th to St Valentine’s Day on February 14th.”

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* states on page 336 in its 15th edition, volume 10: “St Valentine’s day as a lovers’ festival and the modern tradition of sending valentine cards have no relation to the saints but, rather, seem to be connected either with the Roman (sexual) fertility festival of the Lupercalia (February 15th) or with the mating season of birds.”

The *Encyclopedia Americana* states that “this pairing off was, of course, linked with sexual immorality.”

According to the most common explanation, the celebration of Valentine’s Day originated as a pagan tradition in the third century. During this time hordes of hungry wolves roamed outside of Rome where shepherds kept their flocks. The God Lupercus was said to watch over the shepherds and their flocks and keep them from the wolves. Every February the Romans celebrated a feast called Lupercalia to honor Lupercus so that no harm would come to the shepherds and their flocks.

Also during Lupercalia, but in honor of the goddess Juno Februata, the names of young women were put into a box and names were drawn by lot. The boys and girls who were matched would be considered partners for the year, which began in March. This celebration continued long after wolves were a problem to Rome. As Christianity became prevalent, priests attempted to sugarcoat and cover with a Christian mantle old heathen practices. To Christianize the ancient pagan celebration of the Feast of Lupercus, the church officials changed the name to St. Valentine’s Day.

In his book, *“Christianity—the Origins of a Pagan Religion,”* French scholar and professor of medieval French literature, Philippe

Walter, states the following on pages 76–78:

“... the [Catholic] church invented the figures of saints—both men and women—who both borrowed the names of their pagan predecessors and possessed mythical attributes similar to those of their pagan models. This is why we cannot be surprised at worship devoted today to certain mysterious saints—including Saint Valentine. In fact, along with the time of year of his celebration, the initial syllable of his name—val—compels us to establish a potential link with the mythology of Carnival... It is curious that February 14 is celebrated in five regions to commemorate no fewer than five distinct saints all bearing the name Valentine... This phenomenon points to the camouflaging of paganism—most specifically, the rites and myths commemorated on this date in the pagan calendar—in several regions [namely, Rome, Italy; Terni, Italy; Toro, Spain; Puy; and Africa]...”

Alexander Hislop explained in his book, *“Two Babylons,”* that Valentine was a common Roman name. Roman parents often gave the name to their children in honor of the famous man who was first called Valentine in antiquity. That famous man was Lupercus, the hunter. Who was Lupercus? Why should he also have borne the name “Valentine” among the heathen Romans? The Greeks called Lupercus by the name of “Pan.” The Semites called Pan “Baal”—mentioned so often in the Bible—and this name was merely another name for Nimrod, the “mighty hunter” (Genesis 10:9). The hunter Nimrod was the Lupercus—or wolf hunter—of the Romans. “St Valentine’s Day” was originally a day set aside by the pagans in his honor.

Nimrod—Baal or sun god of the ancient pagans—was said to have been born at the winter solstice. In ancient times the solstice occurred on January 6th and his birthday therefore was celebrated on January 6th. Later, as the solstice changed, it was celebrated on December 25th and is now called Christmas. It was the custom of antiquity for the mother of a male child to present herself for purification on the 40th day after the day of birth. The 40th day after January 6th—Nimrod’s original birthdate—takes us to February 15th, the celebration of which began on February 14th—the Lupercalia or St Valentine’s Day. On this day in February, Semiramis, the mother of Nimrod, was said to have been purified and to have appeared for the

first time in public with her son as the original “mother and child.”

Valentine’s Day is one of those pagan days that have become part and parcel of the fabric of today’s society. It is clear that Valentine’s Day—whichever way you look at it—has paganism written all over it. Paganism is not to be entertained by the people of God. God commands us not to worship Him in the way that the pagans worshipped their gods. Therefore, true Christians are not to participate in the celebration of Valentine’s Day.

Mother's Day

The Bible is very explicit that we are to honor our parents at all times. For example, Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:1–3 make this Christian duty very clear. Jesus Christ honored His mother on a continuous basis.

To “honor” or “remember” our mother just on one particular day in the year, while forgetting to do so in day-to-day living, would, of course, be wrong. The world tries to make up for the forgetfulness to always honor one’s parents by dedicating a day to mothers. As Christians, we are to honor our parents at all times! This fact alone, though, would not preclude a Christian from participating in Mother’s Day celebrations.

However, the Bible makes it very clear that we are not to learn the religious ways or customs of the Gentiles or “heathen” by embracing those customs in our own Christian lives (Deuteronomy 12:29–32; Matthew 15:7–9; 2 Corinthians 6:14–17). We are not to keep holidays such as Christmas, Easter, New Year’s or Valentine’s Day because of their pagan origin and the embracing of those days by the Catholic Church in their religious worship.

When reviewing the history of Mother’s Day, we must note the many countries, including the United States, Canada, Germany and Australia, which celebrate Mother’s Day on the second Sunday in May; while on the other hand, England celebrates their Mother’s Day on the fourth Sunday in Lent (the 40 day period leading up to Easter).

Pagans kept a “Mother’s Day” in ancient times for the purpose of honoring their goddesses. However, the mere fact that pagans did so would not preclude Christians from keeping Mother’s Day today, unless a clear connection can be shown between those pagan customs and our modern practices.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, edition 1959, points out regarding “Mother’s Day” celebrations in Great Britain:

“Mother’s Day, a festival derived from the custom of mother worship in ancient Greece. Formal mother worship, with ceremonies to Cybele, or Rhea, the great Mother of the Gods [sic], was performed in the Ides of March throughout Asia Minor. With the coming of

Christianity this developed into worship of the ‘Mother church,’ the celebration occurring on mid-Lent Sunday, when children returned home with gifts for parents, especially the mother.”

Cheri Sicard writes in *“The History of Mother’s Day”*:

“The earliest Mother’s Day celebrations can be traced back to the spring celebrations of ancient Greece, honoring Rhea, the Mother of the [gods] [Rhea is the mother of Zeus. She is also the sister of Cronus, who has been identified as the Baal of the Bible]. The Romans called their version of the event the Hilaria, and celebrated on the Ides of March by making offerings in the temple of Cybele, the mother of the gods. Early Christians celebrated the festival on the fourth... Sunday of Lent in honor of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ. In more recent times, relatively speaking—England in the 1600s—the celebration was expanded to include all mothers with ‘Mothering Sunday’ being celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent (the 40 day period leading up to Easter). Besides attending church services in honor of the Virgin Mary, children returned home from the cities with gifts, flowers, and special Mothering Day cakes that were important parts of the celebration.”

When “Mothering Sunday” was originally kept in England, people brought gifts to the church where they were baptized. They would then also bring gifts, such as cakes, to their mothers. The “Mothering Day” cakes were normally so-called “Simmel Cakes,” which, in early times, were marked with a figure of Christ or Mary, to show their religious significance (compare *Book of Days*, Vol. 1, p. 337).

Many sources point out that the pagan worship of mother goddesses in Greece and Rome was later adopted by Christianity, foremost in England, to incorporate such paganism and to give it a “Christian” mantle. The worship of the Roman Mother goddess Cybele is especially interesting in this context. The Encyclopedia Britannica points out, under “Great Mother of the Gods”:

“Though her cult sometimes existed by itself, in its fully developed state the worship of the Great Mother was accompanied by that of Attis. The cult of Attis never existed independently... The main public event in the worship of the Great Mother was the annual festival, which took place originally April 4.” The article continues to explain that a special day was set aside, “March 24, dies

sanguinis, a day of mourning, fasting and abstinence, especially sexual, commemorating the sorrow of the mother for Attis [who had been killed].” Our free booklet, **“Don’t Keep Christmas,”** explains the Attis cult in more detail.

The above-mentioned article continues that the “importance” of the Cybele cult “in the history of religion is very great, for her cult, like the other mystic worships, at once formed a rival to Christianity and acted as a steppingstone to it.”

As already mentioned, the day became known in England as “Mothering Day” or as “Mid-Lent Sunday.” It was first applied to the worship of “Mother Mary,” and then also to the “Mother Church,” “the spiritual power that gave life and protected them from harm,” as one source puts it. Custom began to dictate that a person visit the church of his/her baptism on “Mothering Day.” People attended the “mother church” of their parish, laden with offerings. Gradually, the custom was applied to honoring our real mothers as well. However, the religious concept of the day was emphasized throughout.

In England, King Henry III (1216–1239) officially established the first “mothering Sunday,” in March, to remember the Church as the religious mother.

When studying the history of Mother’s Day in continental Europe, we find that a “mothering day” was also kept there, in mid-Lent. Later, Mother’s Day was officially celebrated in Germany in 1923 on the second Sunday in May, apparently due to Mother’s Day celebrations in the United States (that had been introduced in continental Europe through the Salvation Army) and the influence of German florists. In 1933, it was made an official holiday in Germany by the Nazi regime, in honor of the “Arian” mother.

In her article, *“Between Ideology and Commerce,”* Isabella Marboe points out that in Austria, “Mother’s Day” celebrations in May were connected with the tradition of the worship of “Mother Mary.” It was especially the Catholic Church, according to Monroe, that strongly supported the establishment of “Mother’s Day” in Austria. In 1926, Ignaz Seipel stated in his “Mother’s Day speech”: “It looks like something new, to introduce a special day to honor our mother. For the believing Catholic this is nothing new at all, as he has always celebrated days in worship of Mary as days to honor his mother.”

The official version of the recent history of the establishment of Mother's Day in the U.S. is fairly well known to many. It is taught that Miss Anna Jarvis (1864–1948) originated Mother's Day, to honor her mother who had died on May 9, 1905. She started a campaign, which led to a resolution, passed by Congress on May 10, 1913, to make the second Sunday in May a national holiday, “dedicated to the memory of the best mother in the world—your mother.” In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation, designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

However, there is more to the story. In fact, Anna Jarvis was not the first, nor the only one, who had voiced the idea of establishing a Mother's Day in the United States.

For instance, Julia Ward Howe had talked about a special “Mother's Day” as early as 1858. She had kept it in a private special celebration in 1872. Howe is the author of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” She grieved for the many young lives that had been killed during the Civil War. She proposed to celebrate a “Mother's Day of Peace.” In addition, she had made at least two extended trips to Europe between 1843 and 1850. During her last trip, she spent almost one year in Rome. In Julia Ward Howe's Mother's Day Declaration, it is stated, “From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says, ‘Disarm, Disarm!’... Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.”

In addition, Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis, wife of a Methodist pastor and mother of Anna Jarvis, had likewise been affected by the Civil War. She proposed a special Mother's Day celebration, which she called a “Mother's Friendship Day,” to heal the wounds and the bridges between the “Blue” and the “Gray.”

Anna Jarvis continued to advocate the idea of a special Mother's Day. On May 10, 1907, she held a special memorial service for her mother (who, as mentioned, had died in 1905). In 1910, West Virginia became the first state to recognize Mother's Day. At the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1912, a delegate from a local church introduced a resolution recognizing Anna Jarvis as the founder of Mother's Day. It was also suggested at that time that the second Sunday in May be observed as Mother's Day.

The religious connection with and influence of the establishment of the American Mother's Day cannot be denied. The modern U.S. Mother's Day started in the Methodist-Episcopal Church, through the effort of Anna Jarvis. It had to be observed on a Sunday. Some had proposed any Sunday (for example, Frank H. Hering of Indiana, who is also called the "Father of Mother's Day"), while others proposed the second Sunday in May. On the first official church memorial of Jarvis' mother, on May 10, 1908, the bells of the church which had been attended by her mother, and who had taught Sunday school there, rang 72 times—since Ann Marie Reeves Jarvis had been 72 years old when she died.

One year prior to this, her daughter had preached a sermon in the local church to honor her mother. She finished the sermon that the preacher had begun. "Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church" in Grafton, West Virginia, is therefore now recognized as the "mother church" of Mother's Day in the United States.

In Calgary, Canada, George Kerby of the Central Methodist Church delivered a touching sermon on the very first Mother's Day in that territory.

Sources also point out that the early way of keeping Mother's Day in the United States was similar to the way with which it was kept during "Mothering Day" in England—including attending on that day the church of one's baptism—and only gradually, "other sentiments were added."

It might be worthwhile noting that Anna Jarvis spent the rest of her life trying to undo what she had done. Enraged by the commercialization, Jarvis filed a lawsuit in 1923 to stop a Mother's Day festival. She was later arrested for disturbing the peace when she learned that a War Mother's Day Convention was selling white carnations—Jarvis' symbol for mothers—to raise money. She spent most of her fortune that she had inherited from her mother to fight a holiday she had helped establish to honor her mother. She told a reporter that she regretted ever having started Mother's Day.

In this lengthy section, we have tried to state the facts, as they have become available to us. We feel that the knowledge of these facts is necessary to make an individual, conscientious and personal decision, whether or not to observe—or to continue celebrating—Mother's

Day. One will have to decide, individually, whether the evidence is sufficient or not to establish a direct and immediate connection between pagan origins, the influence of the Catholic Church and Protestant churches, and our modern custom of celebrating Mother's Day—especially in the United States, Canada and continental Europe. We must emphasize that, in any event, the personal decisions which each Christian must make in his or her life, must be made based on personal faith and conviction, knowing that whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Such a decision must be based on a determination whether or not a particular holiday is derived from pagan customs in connection with the worship of foreign gods. If it is, the observance of such a holiday needs to be avoided.

Father's Day

One source (“*About, Inc.*”) describes the modern origin of Father’s Day in this way: “The modern origin of Father’s Day in the United States is not clear. Some say that it began with a church service in West Virginia in 1908. Others say the first Father’s Day ceremony was held in Vancouver, Washington. The president of the Chicago branch of the Lion’s Club, Harry Meek, is said to have celebrated the first Father’s Day with his organization in 1915; and the day that they chose was the third Sunday in June, the closest date to Meek’s own birthday.

“Regardless of when the first true Father’s Day occurred, the strongest promoter of the holiday was Mrs. Bruce John Dodd of Spokane, Washington. Mrs. Dodd felt that she had an outstanding father [Mr. Smart]. He was a veteran of the Civil War. His wife had died young, and he had raised six children without their mother. In 1909, Mrs. Dodd approached her own minister and others in Spokane about having a church service dedicated to fathers on June 5, her father’s birthday. That date was too soon for her minister to prepare the service, so he spoke a few weeks later on June 19th. From then on, the state of Washington celebrated the third Sunday in June as Father’s Day... States and organizations began lobbying Congress to declare an annual Father’s Day. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson approved the idea, but it was not until 1924 when President Calvin Coolidge made it a national event...”

The holiday was made official in 1972 by President Richard Nixon (see below).

The *Daily Beacon*, Volume 90, Number 5 (June 14, 2002), elaborated: “In 1909, as Smart [i.e., Mrs. Bruce John Dodd, daughter of Mr. Smart] was listening to a sermon celebrating Mother’s Day, she thought of her father... Smart wanted a day to honor fathers with special religious services, special meals, small gifts and flowers. After sharing her idea with local religious leaders..., a resolution was passed to observe a Father’s Day.”

Biography.com concurs, “... The inspiration behind the celebration of a Father’s Day is owed at least partly to its slightly earlier counterpart, Mother’s Day.” The article also points out that Smart had

the idea of setting aside a Father's Day, when hearing a sermon on the "merits of setting aside a day to honor one's mother" (Compare, too, PageWise, Inc., 2002, "History of Father's Day").

"Hallmark Press Room" explains, under "Father's Day 2003": "Father's Day is always the third Sunday in June... Father's Day is the fourth-largest card-sending occasion with nearly 90 million Father's Day cards expected to be given this year in the United States... Smart's daughter [Mrs. Bruce John Dodd] got the idea for Father's Day in 1909 while listening to a Mother's Day sermon at church. She encouraged local churches to institute a Father's Day observance the following year on one Sunday in June, the month of her father's birth... The holiday was made official in 1972 when President Richard Nixon signed a presidential resolution that declared Father's Day as the third Sunday in June."

Apart from its obvious connection with Mother's Day and its religious church background, is there any evidence that Father's Day is of pagan and/or Catholic origin?

The Laboratorium writes under "Happy Father's Day": "Father's Day was originally a pagan holiday, the Great Sky-Father's Day. Part of the week of celebrations leading up to the summer solstice, the day was given over to celebrating the Sky-Father's providing for his human children with rich gifts of sun and rain. Gifts of sacrificial goats and sheep (recognizable by the festive ribbons bound about their necks) were supplemented with prayers for his continued guidance in the human journey towards spiritual adulthood.

"The precise transition to the Father's Day we know today is lost in the mists of time, but it seems that several generations of CHRISTIAN PRIESTS gradually ATTEMPTED TO NEUTRALIZE THE PAGAN RITUALS by focusing on the literal steps of the ceremonies, rather than their spiritual meanings. The passing of celebratory garlands from sons to fathers was retained, and reemphasized as the central act of the great Sky-Father's celebration, rather than the sacrifices and prayers. As part of this reinterpretation, the practice of tying ribbons was moved from the animals to the fathers, and appears to be recognizably the origin of the custom of giving ties on Father's Day."

The connection with pagan and/or Catholic origins becomes even

clearer, when considering modern Father's Day celebrations and customs in certain European countries. In Palermo, Italy, Father's Day is celebrated on March 19 in order to honor "Holy Joseph." On that day, old furniture, tables and other items are burned. As "Bank4Fun" explains, "this custom is derived from the Worship of the Sun, which has an historical origin in Palermo."

In Austria, Father's Day, which is celebrated in June, is a Christian CHURCH holiday. In Germany, "Father's Day" has been celebrated, since 1936, on the same day as "Ascension Day." This CATHOLIC holiday, also known as "the Day of the Lord," is always kept on a Thursday—40 days, or on the 5th Sunday, *after Easter*—to celebrate Christ's ascension. On this day, men visit restaurants, consuming a lot of alcohol, while it is unfashionable to travel with a woman on that day. "Glaube Aktuell" and Professor Gottfried Rehm, Fulda, explain that these restaurant visits, as well as Catholic processions on that day, have their origins in Germanic customs, when men drank alcohol and *asked their gods to bless the harvest for the year*. Others, such as doctor of theology, Manfred Becker-Huberti, point out that the Father's Day celebrations might be derived from honoring Pope Leo III (795–816).

Studying these facts in conjunction with the section on "Mother's Day," we must again emphasize that it is the personal decision of each Christian whether or not to keep those days. His decision must be based on personal faith and conviction, knowing that whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

Thanksgiving Day

The following discussion pertains mostly to our American readers, but it includes helpful guidelines and illustrations for non-Americans in order to determine how to view the celebration of similar holidays in other countries.

The first observance of the Thanksgiving Festival in America occurred in early November or December of 1621 (historical sources vary on the exact time), when the Governor of Plymouth Colony, William Bradford, appointed a three-day feast. That observance was established to show gratitude to the Almighty as that difficult year drew to an end and the harvest was plentiful.

While this was not the first Thanksgiving in America (thanksgiving services were held in Virginia as early as 1607), it was America's first Thanksgiving Festival.

Pilgrim Edward Winslow described the Pilgrims' Thanksgiving in these words: "Our harvest being gotten in, our Governor sent four men on fowling [bird hunting] so that we might, after a special manner, rejoice together after we had gathered the fruit of our labors. They... in one day killed as much fowl as... served the company almost a week... Many of the Indians [came] amongst us and... their greatest King, Massasoit, with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted; and they went out and killed five deer, which they brought... And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God we are... far from want."

The Pilgrims had left Plymouth, England, on September 6, 1620, sailing for a new world that offered the promise of both civil and religious liberty. One source tells us that the Pilgrims were Separatists, America's Calvinist Protestants, who rejected the institutional Church of England. They believed that the worship of God must originate in the inner man, and that corporate forms of worship prescribed by man interfered with the establishment of a true relationship with God. The Separatists used the term "church" to refer to the people, the Body of Christ, not to a building or institution.

Following that first observance, the colonists continued to celebrate days of thanksgiving annually, in recognition of the blessings

received of this new land. The first Thanksgiving to God in the Calvinist tradition in Plymouth Colony was actually celebrated during the summer of 1623, when the colonists declared a Thanksgiving holiday after their crops were saved by much-needed rainfall.

This day has been preserved and continued by Presidents of the United States who believed, more or less, in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Bible, as a source of national greatness and integrity. In 1789, America's first President, George Washington, issued a Thanksgiving proclamation in honor of the new Constitution. He stated, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

God illustrates this principle in Deuteronomy 17:18–19. He specifically shows that it is His desire that the leaders of nations govern based upon the principles and laws of the Bible.

Abraham Lincoln recognized the need for the people to stay close to God if they would continue to receive the blessings, which were being afforded them by the Almighty.

In early July of 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg had occurred, taking some 60,000 American lives, and President Lincoln traveled to the battlefield four months afterward, in November, to deliver the "Gettysburg Address." He later explained: "When I left Springfield [to become President] I asked the people to pray for me. I was not a Christian. When I buried my son, the severest trial of my life, I was not a Christian. But when I went to Gettysburg and saw the graves of thousands of our soldiers, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ."

On October 3, 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day; a day set aside to give God thanks for the blessings He continued to bestow upon America.

President Lincoln's Thanksgiving Day proclamation, which was passed by Congress, stated the following: "The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the Source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart, which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence...."

“Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than theretofore.

“Population has steadily increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

“No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”

That proclamation was repeated for the following 75 years by every subsequent president, until 1939, when Franklin D. Roosevelt moved Thanksgiving Day up one week earlier than had been tradition, to appease merchants who wanted more time to feed the growing pre-Christmas consumer frenzy. Folding to congressional pressure two years later, Roosevelt signed a resolution returning Thanksgiving to the fourth Thursday of November, as Congress in 1941 permanently set the fourth Thursday of each November as America’s national day of Thanksgiving.

But would God have true Christians keep this day as a national holiday, since this is not a day He established and specifically requires in Scripture?

We have examples of national holidays established by the Jews and recorded in Scripture for historical purposes—days, which were not instituted specifically by God. Thus, the fact that Thanksgiving Day was established by man, does not, in itself, make

it wrong for a Christian to celebrate such a day.

In John 10:22–23, we find Jesus attending the “Feast of Dedication,” which was established by the Jews to commemorate the purification of the Temple at Jerusalem. That feast was celebrated on the anniversary of the day that the re-establishment of divine worship occurred, after Antiochus Epiphanes had been vanquished and the Temple had been purified. This occurred around 165 A.D.

Thus, Christ’s attendance at that annual holiday clearly illustrated that it was not wrong to attend and celebrate a national holiday established for the right purposes. There was nothing ungodly in celebrating this holiday and giving special thanks to God on that day!

Esther and Mordecai established the Feast of Purim to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from Haman (Esther 9), and the Bible does not condemn them for this.

A very significant point here is that we do not find pagan origins in the Jewish holidays of the “Feast of Dedication” or the “Feast of Purim.” That is true also in relation to the establishment of Thanksgiving as a national holiday. Of course, the early pilgrims celebrated their first Thanksgiving Day in 1621 together with Native Americans, but they did so to thank God—not pagan gods—for His protection and blessing. Neither did they do it to follow Roman Catholic practices; in fact, they had left Europe to find religious freedom in the New World. By contrast, Christmas, Easter, Halloween or other festivals, as described in this booklet, were originally celebrated in honor of pagan gods and pagan traditions.

It appears from the foregoing that it is not necessarily wrong for true Christians to participate in Thanksgiving Day observances. At the same time, it cannot be denied that Thanksgiving Day celebrations originated with professing Christian pilgrims, whose understanding of true Christianity differed sharply from that of the Bible. But, they did understand that Christians are duty-bound to give thanks to God Almighty for His blessings, and subsequent leaders of this country shared in that common belief.

On the other hand, if someone is conscientiously opposed to celebrating Thanksgiving Day, he must not violate his own conscience in this regard (seeing that God *does not command* Thanksgiving Day observances), as everything “not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

Birthday Celebrations

The Bible specifically mentions two birthday celebrations of kings, ending with the deaths of certain individuals (John the Baptist and Pharaoh's chief baker, compare Mark 6:21–27 and Genesis 40:20–22). There is another possible reference to birthday celebrations in Job 1:4: “And his [Job's] sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.” The German *Menge* Bible explains that this is a reference to the “birthdays” of Job's sons (A similar expression is used in Job 3:1, referring to Job's day of birth). The children's conduct prompted righteous Job to “sanctify them,” for he said, “It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts” (Job 1:5).

Job's reaction is interesting. He did not feel that the children HAD sinned by celebrating their birthdays, but that they MIGHT have sinned. On the other hand, we do not find any biblical record that righteous people celebrated their own birthdays—nor do we find that Jesus Christ celebrated His birthday or that He told His disciples to celebrate it.

A birthday celebration with its accompanying elaborate parties and the giving of expensive gifts tends to emphasize the attitude of get and vanity—rather than the way of give, which Christians are to follow. God's Word condemns the glorifying of oneself. Compare Galatians 5:26: “Let us not be desirous of vainglory” (*Authorized Version*). It appears that Job was concerned that his children might have engaged in selfish and vainglorious conduct during their birthday celebrations.

Josephus, a Jewish first-century historian, wrote: “Nay indeed the law does not permit us to make festivals at the births of our children” (*Against Apion*, book 11, 26). It would therefore appear that many or most Jews in Christ's day did not keep birthdays.

On the other hand, there is a difference between elaborate birthday celebrations and the acknowledgment that someone has become a year older. Obviously, the date of one's birth is not pagan (regardless of whether one recognizes and counts by the Hebrew or the Roman calendar). It is not wrong and does in fact obey the command to honor

our parents, to call, visit or send a modest gift to our parents on the day of their birth. Likewise, there are certain milestone years in the lives of young persons that can be acknowledged, such as reaching the age of 14, 16, 18 or 21. (For instance, the Jews have traditionally acknowledged the fact when a boy turns 14.) Also, in ancient Israel, young men being 20 or older were considered old enough to go to war, and a census was held to record the ages of the people (compare Numbers 1:2–3).

The distinction between simple acknowledgments and elaborate celebrations of birthdays may not always be that clear. God has given us a spirit of a sound mind (compare 2 Timothy 1:7), and if we are honest with God and ourselves, we will learn how to please Him better in everything we do (compare Ephesians 4:13). As long as the principles stated herein are adhered to and problems such as the danger of supporting vainglory and vanity are avoided, acknowledgments of certain birthdays of special people close to us are individual decisions.

However, we must keep in mind, once again, that we must not violate our own conscience in this regard, as everything “not from faith is sin” (Romans 14:23).

Sunday Celebrations

Pagans worshiped the sun on Sunday (Sun's day). It was a heathen festival in honor of the sun god. Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary* says that Sunday was so "called because the day was anciently dedicated to the sun or to its worship." The *North British Review*, Vol. 18, p. 409, calls Sunday "the wild solar holiday of all Pagan times." The *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* points out that Sunday—the *Dies Solis* of the Roman calendar—was the day of the sun because it was dedicated to the sun.

Webster writes in his book "Rest Days," on page 270: "What began, however, as a Pagan ordinance, ended as a Christian regulation..." *Schaff's Church History* states on page 375: "Not a few pagan habits crept into the church concealed by new names. This is conceded by the most earnest of the Fathers. Leo the Great speaks of Christians in Rome who worshiped the sun... In the celebration of Sunday, as it was introduced by Constantine, and still continues on the whole continent of Europe, the cultus of the old Sun god Apollo mingles with the remembrance of the resurrection of Christ."

The Persians worshipped the sun god Baal under the name of "Mithra" or "Mithras," and through Persian and Roman influence, nominal confessing "Christians" adopted Sunday worship in lieu of the Sabbath. They simply replaced Sunday worship of Baal or Mithra with Sunday worship of "Christ."

The German "P.M." magazine published a few years ago an article, entitled, "Can You Imagine to Believe in Mithras?" It began this way: "An early day in the year 180 A.D. A usual Sunday in the harbor town of Ostia in front of the gates of Rome. Commotion in the different parts of town. Everywhere we see groups of men moving through the narrow village quarters... But no one takes note of them... Everyone knows where the men go to: It is Sunday, the day of the Sun—the men are going to services. Are they Christians? Do we experience here a typical scene from the early days of this religion? No—the men worship another god. Mithras is the name of that transcendent being from whom they expect salvation... Mithras was the main god of the Roman legions... It was Emperor Constantine who was pushing in the Council of Nice (which is in Turkey today) in 325 to

unite his subjects under one faith... Although the emperor himself belonged to the cult of the sun worship (he was only baptized on his deathbed), he decided on Christianity as the common confession for all the Romans. In order to make the new religion acceptable for the followers of Mithras, he declared Sunday as the common day of rest for all of his empire..."

Listen to this additional explanation from Esme Wynne-Tyson's "Mithras, *The Fellow in the Cap*," as stated on pp. 22 and 24: "From the first, Mithras was equated with the Sun and with light... In brief, he is a pagan Christ... Mithras was... the Sun-God... Sunday... was consecrated to him, and known as the Lord's Day long before the Christian era."

John M. Robertson wrote in "Pagan Christs, *Studies in Comparative Hierology*," on pp. 305, 306, 327: "The first day of the week, Sunday, was apparently from time immemorial consecrated to Mithra..."

Note this remarkable quote from H.G. Well's, "The Outline of History," on page 543: "It would seem the Christians adopted Sunday as their chief day of worship instead of the... Sabbath, from the Mithraic cult."

Sunday was a day dedicated to the worship of pagan gods. True Christians should not have anything to do with such practice.

But—Didn't Paul Keep Sunday?

He did not. Some quote a passage in Acts 20:7 to "prove" that he did. But a closer look at this Scripture reveals that it does not teach that Paul kept Sunday as the day of worship.

It reads: "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." This Scripture does not say that Paul observed Sunday, the first day of the week, as a day of worship. If this was an example for us today, we would be starting the service on Saturday night, not on Sunday morning. In addition, verse 11 shows Paul preached and talked to them until dawn. Again, using this passage as a command for us today, we would have to have worship services from Saturday night until Sunday morning.

Next, we realize that the breaking of bread (as mentioned in Acts 20:7) was not a religious service, but merely the eating of a meal.

Acts 27:33–38 proves this. Notice Paul’s situation. He was a Roman prisoner in the midst of many Gentiles on board a ship (Acts 27:1–2). Obviously Paul was not holding a religious service. The men ate for their health (verses 33–34).

David Stern writes in *Jewish New Testament Commentary* (1991), on page 227: “Many Christians assume that [breaking bread] refers to ‘taking communion’ . . . However, the context is not twentieth-century Christianity but first-century Judaism, and for the Jews then, as now, fellowship was mediated by meals. To say that the early Messianic Jews broke bread is to say neither more nor less than that they ate together.”

Acts 20:7 does not describe a regular service. Notice the context. Paul was en route from Greece to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2–3, 16). Since he did not know when he would see the brethren again, he wanted to teach them as much as possible. The people were more than willing to listen. So, after the Sabbath Paul remained behind to teach the brethren, while his ship sailed around the peninsula (verse 13). He continued talking with them until midnight, and continued, after a short meal, until daybreak (verse 11). After Paul had stayed as long as he could, he left them and walked across the peninsula to meet the boat (verses 13–14). He “worked” on that Sunday by taking this long walk of some 19 miles!

There is nothing in the above Scripture to indicate it was Paul’s custom to observe Sunday. In fact, all through the book of Acts we see it was Paul’s custom to observe the Sabbath (Acts 17:2; 13:14–15, 42–44).

Ancient Israel Kept Sunday—But Shouldn’t Have

It is true that ancient Israel kept Sunday, but God condemned them for it.

Even though the Bible nowhere states explicitly that the ancient house of Israel kept Sunday, it is very clear from the implicit record that they did. It is also clear that God punished them severely for this practice. We know that they abandoned the weekly Sabbath—the seventh day of the week (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset). This was one reason why they went into slavery. We also know that they were guilty of idolatry; e.g., Baal worship. Historical records

prove that Baal—the pagan sun god—was worshipped on his day, Sunday—the first day of the week. In fact, Baal was worshipped under many different names throughout man’s history.

For instance, we find the following comments in *“Funk and Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia,”* under “Baalbek,” a town in Eastern Lebanon: “The name, which means ‘City of Baal,’ is derived from the early association of the town with the worship of Baal, a local sun deity whom the ancient Greeks identified with their sun god, Helios; the Greeks and Romans called the town Heliopolis, ‘City of the Sun.’”

We find that under King Jeroboam of Israel, they began to worship Baal. We read in 1 Kings 12:28 that the king “made two calves of gold,” telling the people that they were “your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

Later, in 2 Kings 17:16–17, we find this revealing statement: “So they left ALL the commandments of the LORD their God [including the Sabbath commandment and the injunction against committing idolatry], made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshipped all the host of heaven, AND SERVED BAAL. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD...”

The fact that they turned to Baal worship is proof in itself that they began to observe his day—the first day of the week; i.e., Sunday. Some 200 years later, God rebuked the house of Israel through the prophet Hosea, comparing it with a fallen or unfaithful woman: **“I will punish her For the DAYS of the Baals to which she burned incense... But Me she forgot,’ says the LORD”** (Hosea 2:13).

The commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* explains the expression “DAYS of BAALS” as follows: “the days consecrated to the Baals, or various images of Baal in different cities, whence the names Baal-gad, Baal-hermon, etc.” These “days” included Sunday, as well as other pagan holidays.

Returning to King Jeroboam, note what else is revealed about him in 2 Kings 17:21–23: “Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not

depart from them, until the LORD removed Israel out of His sight... So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria..."

It appears, therefore, that Jeroboam's GREAT sin, as well as ALL THE SINS, which he did and which were adopted by the house of Israel, included the abolishment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday worship. The Bible says that they continued with that practice, until God punished them severely by carrying them away—into Assyrian slavery (compare Ezekiel 20:12–13, 18–20, 23–24).

But—Are we not to keep Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection?

Some claim that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday morning, and that we therefore must keep Sunday, instead of the weekly Sabbath. First of all, even IF Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, that still does not permit us to abrogate God's commanded Sabbath worship (see discussion below) and replace it with Sunday.

But then, as we saw earlier in this booklet, Christ was NOT resurrected on Sunday morning. Therefore, there is no biblical basis to celebrate Sunday, instead of the weekly Sabbath.

Chapter 2 . . . And God's Holy Days

Man's holidays are inventions of the human mind, and many of them are of pagan origin. Some, however, are neutral. Even though they are not commanded in Scripture, they are not necessarily prohibited, either expressly, or based on spiritual principles. Still, it is the obligation of an individual Christian not to violate his conscience—which must be in harmony with God's Word—when deciding whether or not he should participate in celebrations of such humanly devised holidays, as long as they are neutral and as long as their customs are not of pagan origin in connection with the worship of foreign gods.

Christians, however, are not free to reject their observance of God's *commanded* Holy Days. They are, in fact, duty-bound to keep them, and their refusal to do so constitutes sin.

What, exactly, then, are those Holy Days that God commands His people to keep, even today?

Weekly Sabbath

God commands His people to worship Him on the Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset)—NOT on Sunday.

Listed below are seven proofs, which, when taken together, show that the Sabbath is still in effect and is to be observed by Christians today.

1. Mark 2:27–28—The Sabbath was made specifically for man, and Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath, not some other day.
2. Genesis 2:2–3—The Sabbath was made by God at the same time man was made, and was set apart as holy time for all mankind, forever.
3. Exodus 16—Israel had lost the knowledge of the Sabbath during their time of slavery in Egypt, so God showed them which day it was by means of special miracles, thereby re-emphasizing the importance of keeping the Sabbath holy.
4. Exodus 20: 8–11—The Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments.
5. Luke 4:16—Jesus kept the Sabbath.
6. Acts 17:2—Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, also kept the Sabbath.
7. Isaiah 66:23—The Sabbath will be kept in the future when God’s Kingdom will be ruling on the earth.

It is interesting to note that in Acts 15, the apostles and elders had come together because of various disputes that had to be cleared up. If there was any question concerning the Sabbath or the annual Holy Days, surely it would have been a point of discussion at that meeting. But there is no mention of a discussion pertaining to those days.

We must conclude that true Christians are to keep the Sabbath today.

But—Wasn’t the Sabbath made only for the Jews?

It is not correct that the Sabbath was made for the Jews only. The Sabbath is mentioned in the very second chapter of the Bible, where God set it aside as HOLY, to be USED *by man* for a HOLY purpose.

God created the Sabbath at the time He created man. We read

in Genesis 2:2–3, “He RESTED on the seventh day from all His work... Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work.” The word for “rested,” in the Hebrew, is “*shabath*,” and it means, according to *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, “to cease, rest, keep Sabbath.” God initiated the Sabbath at the time of the creation of man, by RESTING, or ceasing from His work, and He “sanctified” that day; that is, He “set it aside for a holy purpose.”

Later, we read in Exodus 20:11 that God “rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the SABBATH day and hallowed it.”

Also, we read that God made the Sabbath for MAN—not only for the Jews or the Israelites (Mark 2:27).

The reason that God had to re-introduce the Sabbath to the people at the time of Moses (recorded in Exodus 16), is that they had just been released from over 400 years of slavery in Egypt, where they had FORGOTTEN to keep the Sabbath. They were under hard bondage and were **forced to work every day**, obviously not being allowed to keep the Sabbath. So, in time, they got used to not keeping it. Note what God said to Moses, after they had gone out on the Sabbath to gather manna for the first time: “HOW LONG do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath...” (Exodus 16:28–29). The people had not kept God’s Sabbath for a very LONG time—that is why God is asking, “HOW LONG do you refuse” to keep it holy?

But—Didn’t Paul abolish the Sabbath?

Paul did not teach that the Law of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:1–22)—including the Sabbath command (Exodus 20:8–11; Deuteronomy 5:12–15)—was done away. Some cite Galatians 3:10–13 as a basis for teaching that the “law” was abolished when Jesus died, and that we are cursed when we keep the Ten Commandments.

Galatians 3:10–13 reads: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight

of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’).”

In Galatians 3:10–13, Paul speaks about the “works of the law.” In reading this passage, we must consider the context to see what specific law it refers to. It is important to realize that the Bible uses the word “law” in many different ways. For instance, it can refer to the spiritual LAW of the Ten Commandments, or to ritual temporary laws or regulations that pertain to sacrifices, washings and other physical instructions.

Anyone was cursed who did not continue in *everything* that was written in the Law, including the physical regulations or works of the law, pertaining to washings, rituals and sacrifices.

Paul, then, introduces an additional thought in Galatians 3:19 when he says that **the law was added** because of transgression. That statement refers to *that part* of the law, which has to do with sacrifices and other rituals, as well as the curses, or penalties, for violating God’s spiritual Law.

The “law,” mentioned in Galatians 3:19, was ADDED “four hundred and thirty years” after God’s covenant with Abraham (compare verse 17). It was added because of transgression (verse 19). The Bible teaches that SIN is the transgression of the LAW (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). The Law of the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath commandment, existed since the creation of Adam and Eve. But because the people had sinned by transgressing the spiritual LAW of the Ten Commandments (Romans 7:14), as well as the statutes and judgments that embellish those righteous commandments, ANOTHER “law” was ADDED—the temporary physical law dealing with sacrifices and other rituals.

Paul’s use of the word “law” in the third chapter of the book of Galatians, then, does not relate to the Ten Commandments at all, but to an altogether different set of rules—the sacrificial law SYSTEM, **which was added** some time after Moses had brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt (compare Jeremiah 7:21–23).

Paul uses the same language in Romans 5. A careful analysis shows that he speaks there, again, about two sets of laws—the Ten

Commandments, and the sacrificial system, which was ADDED because of sin. In Romans 5:12–14, Paul says: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin [death came through sin, because death is the penalty for sin, compare Romans 6:23], and thus death spread to ALL men, because ALL SINNED—(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. NEVERTHELESS death REIGNED from Adam to Moses...).”

Paul says here that ALL sinned; that all incurred the DEATH penalty BECAUSE they had sinned; and that there is no penalty if there is no law. THEREFORE, SINCE there was a death penalty, there had to be a LAW. But then, Paul says that that condition—the death penalty—already existed before the “law” was in the world. How clear, then, that he is talking about TWO different sets of law! The law that came into the world at the time of Moses had to be different from the law that already existed from the time of Adam.

Paul continued in verse 20: “Moreover the law entered [*Coonybear*: “was ADDED”] that the offense might abound.” What law entered? What law was added? NOT the Law of the Ten Commandments, which was in force and effect since Adam, but the sacrificial law system which “entered” or was “added” more than 430 years after Abraham’s covenant with God.

The Bible does not contradict itself. One Scripture does not “break” or “make of no effect” another Scripture (John 10:35)!

A law was added because of transgressions. This law cannot be the Ten Commandments. Rather, because people had transgressed the Law of the Ten Commandments, an **additional law** was given to the people. Paul’s statement that the law was added because of transgression (Galatians 3:19), and that a law “entered” the world AFTER sin and death were already in the world (Romans 5:12–14, 20), refers to that part of the physical law that has to do with sacrifices and other rituals. Because the people had sinned by transgressing the spiritual LAW of the Ten Commandments, as well as those statutes and judgments which embellish those righteous commandments, ANOTHER “law” was ADDED and came into the world—the temporary physical law dealing with sacrifices and other rituals.

But—Didn't Paul say that he was free from the law of the Sabbath?

One of the Scriptures that has been used by some to support their false claim that Paul no longer taught obedience to God's Law of the Ten Commandments—including Sabbath observance—is 1 Corinthians 9:20–21. This is, however, not at all what Paul was saying here.

Let us read, in context, the entire passage, as stated in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23:

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.”

Paul recognized the ongoing validity of God's Law (especially the Ten Commandments, which includes the command to keep the Sabbath holy). They are not “old covenant laws.” In fact, to call them such reveals total ignorance as to what a covenant is. A covenant is simply a contract, which is based on law—it does not bring law into existence. When a covenant becomes obsolete, this does not affect the laws on which the covenant is based. To term certain laws “old covenant laws” is just an idle and futile attempt to somehow make those laws obsolete.

We should note that Paul did keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days, even in the presence of Gentiles. In fact, Paul even COMMANDED the Gentiles to keep the Sabbath, the Holy Days and the dietary laws.

What, then, did Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 9:20–21?

As we saw in previous sections of this booklet, the New Testament makes it clear that certain SACRIFICIAL laws are no longer binding today. Paul calls them “a tutor” in Galatians 3:24. This ritual law, which is referred to as a “LAW,” “was added because of transgression” (Galatians 3:19). Sin is the transgression of the

Law (1 John 3:4)—the Ten Commandments (James 2:8–12). We see, then, that the Ten Commandments—the “LAW”—had to be in effect BEFORE the sacrificial law system was added, as that was added BECAUSE OF transgression. The sacrificial system with its ritualistic rules is no longer necessary to be kept. At the same time, it would NOT be SINFUL to keep it while in the presence of Jews. Therefore, when Paul was with Jews, he would not offend them by refusing to keep their customs. He would not keep those customs, of course, when he was with Gentiles, as those customs or ritualistic laws are no longer binding. Paul DID make clear, however, that he DID teach and keep the spiritual LAW of God (Romans 7:14) that IS still binding, including ALL of the Ten Commandments (Matthew 19:17–19).

Notice how the “*Nelson Study Bible*” explains 1 Corinthians 9:19–23:

“Paul put his ministry of the gospel above his personal desires. He was willing to conform to the customs of other people, whether Jew or Gentile, in order to bring them to Christ. For example, in order to relate to the Jews in Jerusalem he made a Nazarite vow in the temple (Acts 21:23, 24). Around those who were under the Law—the Jews—Paul obeyed the Law. Around those who were outside the Law—the Gentiles—Paul did not observe JEWISH CUSTOM. Paul clarified this, however, lest anyone misunderstand his actions. He obeyed GOD’S LAW through obedience toward Christ.”

The *New Bible Commentary* concurs, referring to the ritualistic sacrificial law as the “Mosaic” law:

“Paul has surrendered more than his right to personal subsistence. Though he is free from all men, i.e. in no sense bound by the standards or fashions of others, he is prepared to make himself a slave to all, and conform to their standards or fashions, providing no real principle is at stake, in order to win as many as possible... So when among Jews he acts as a Jew, conforming to their customs under the Mosaic law (Acts 16:3; 18:18; 21:26), though as a Christian he himself is no longer obliged to keep that law (cf. Gal. 2:11–21). Similarly he is ready to identify himself with those who are not bound by the Jewish law, i.e. Gentiles; though he adds an important proviso. Gentiles not only disregard the Mosaic law [our comment: that part of the law of

Moses that is ritual and no longer binding], but may also refuse to recognize any divine commandments [our comment: the Ten Commandments with its statutes and judgments—including the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days, and the dietary and tithing laws].”

Paul never taught others to sin, and he was careful that he did not sin, either. He would have never disobeyed God by breaking His Law, only to “win” the Gentiles. He was NOT without God’s Law, although he did no longer preach as binding and mandatory physical circumcision or other sacrificial rituals, as those—temporary—laws had been abolished by God in the New Testament. At the same time, he did not offend his Jewish audience by violating their customs and traditions, as long as he could keep them without sinning against God.

Finally, although he was not “*under the law*,” he became as one “under the law,” so that he might win those under the law. The term “under the law” refers to its penalty. When we sin, the penalty of sin—death—is hanging *over* us like the sword of Damocles. Through the Sacrifice of Christ, our repentance and our belief in and acceptance of His Sacrifice, we can have forgiveness of our sins; that is, we won’t have to die anymore. The death penalty is no longer hanging over our heads. In order to win those who had not yet accepted Christ’s Sacrifice, Paul became as one of them. He showed them compassion and sympathy, rather than condemning and offending them. He became as one *under the penalty* of the Law, as he understood what it was like to live in sin, being cut off and separated from God.

Paul never taught that any of God’s abiding laws could be broken. He taught, “It is the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath” (Hebrews 4:9; *Lamsa* translation). Those who want to REFUSE to keep God’s spiritual Law, including the weekly Sabbath, twist certain Scriptures and invent arguments to justify their sinful conduct. They do this, however, “to their own destruction” (compare 2 Peter 3:14–16).

But—Didn’t Christ come to abolish the Law, including the Sabbath command, by fulfilling it for US?

Christ’s statement that He came to FULFILL the Law does NOT mean that He did away with it—quite the CONTRARY is correct.

Notice what Christ said in Matthew 5:17: “Do NOT think that I came to DESTROY the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy BUT to fulfill.” Christ did not say here that He had come to destroy the Law. Neither did He say that “fulfilling” the Law meant, “destroying it,” because if that was true, Christ’s statement would read: “I did not come to destroy the Law but to destroy the Law.” This would make no sense.

In the Greek, the word for “fulfill” is “*pleroo*.” It is true that this word can designate completion or even cessation—but as will be pointed out, it can also mean a continued activity of carrying out something—depending on the context. For instance, in Luke 7:1, the word “*pleroo*” is used in the sense of “end” or “conclude”: “Now when He concluded all His sayings...” In Acts 19:21, the Greek word is translated as “accomplished”: “When these things were accomplished...” (The *Authorized Version* says “ended” in both passages.)

However, in the majority of cases, the Greek word “*pleroo*” conveys the meaning of “filling up” or “making full,” with the concept of continuing to carry out a specific task (compare *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*).

In Matthew 3:15, it is used in this context: “...it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”

In Philippians 2:2, Paul states, “...fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love.” Further, Paul reminds the saints in Colosse that he became a minister to “fulfill the word of God” (Colossians 1:25), and he admonishes Archippus to “take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it” (Colossians 4:17). None of these passages convey the thought that something has ended. Rather, the obvious understanding is that something should be *continued to be filled with meaning*, or to be brought to perfection. God’s spiritual Law, as defined in the Ten Commandments, the statutes and the judgments, “stand[s] fast forever and ever” (Psalm 111:7–8), and it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away “than for one tittle of the law to fail” (Luke 16:17). A tittle is the smallest stroke in a Hebrew letter.

Christ did not come to do away with God’s spiritual Law of the Ten Commandments! He stated in Matthew 5:17 that He had NOT come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it—to magnify it, to exalt it and

make it more honorable (Isaiah 42:21), to fill it up with its intended meaning, to show how to keep it perfectly in the flesh.

The apostle James silences those who claim that we today do not have to keep ALL of God's Ten Commandments. Let's read his decisive answer in James 2:8–12: "If you really fulfill [that is, keep] the royal law according to the Scripture, You shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep [or, fulfill] THE WHOLE LAW, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of ALL. For He who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a TRANSGRESSOR of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty."

In this passage, the Greek word for "fulfill" is "*teleo*," but the intended meaning is obviously the same: We are to continue fulfilling or keeping the Law—not ceasing to keep it. This conclusion is clear when we understand what sin is—and that we have to repent of sin to obtain eternal life.

What, exactly, is it that we need to repent of? Simply put, we must repent of the sins we have committed. What is sin? The biblical definition is: "...sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*). Which law? The Law of God's Ten Commandments. James calls it the "royal law according to the Scripture" (James 2:8). It defines our love toward God and our love toward neighbor. When we break even one of the Ten Commandments, we are guilty of having broken them all and have become a transgressor of the Law (James 2:10–11).

The Law of the Ten Commandments is a spiritual Law, as Paul explains in Romans 7:14, because it regulates not only our actions, but also the motives and intents of our heart. We sin when we commit adultery (Exodus 20:14), but we also sin when we DESIRE or COVET the wife of another man (Exodus 20:17), or when we look at another woman with the desire to commit adultery with her (Matthew 5:28). Additionally, we sin when we kill someone (Exodus 20:13), though we have *already sinned* by violating God's spiritual Law of the Ten Commandments *when we even HATE another human being* (Matthew 5:21–22; 1 John 3:15).

Clearly, Christ did not come to do away with God's Law; otherwise, there would be no more sin and we would not need to repent of anything. But Christ said that we have to REPENT and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14–15). Even after His physical death, the resurrected Christ commanded His disciples that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name” (Luke 24:47). And Peter proclaimed that same message, which is recorded in Acts 2:38. Christ had come to FULFILL the Law, that is, He kept it PERFECTLY, giving us an example that we “should follow His steps” (compare 1 Peter 2:21). He did not keep the Law FOR us, so that we don't have to keep it anymore. Rather, as He told a young rich ruler: “If you want to enter into life, KEEP the commandments” (compare Matthew 19:17).

The teaching of the Bible is consistent. In order to inherit eternal life, we must keep God's Law—the Ten Commandments—as well as the statutes and judgments that define and explain the Ten Commandments even further. Christ did not come to “fulfill” the Law by doing away with it or by destroying it. Rather, Christ came to “fulfill” the Law by making it more honorable (Isaiah 42:21), by MAGNIFYING it, by showing us HOW to obey it, both in the letter AND in the SPIRIT. This includes ALL of God's commandments—including the keeping of the Fourth Commandment, which enjoins us to keep God's Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8).

But—Doesn't Paul say in 2 Corinthians 3:3–11 that the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, are abolished?

Some believe that 2 Corinthians 3:3–11, especially verse 7, teaches that the Ten Commandments, which were written on tablets of stone, ceased to be in force and effect when Jesus Christ died on the cross (compare *Ryrie Study Bible*, footnote to 2 Corinthians 3:7). However, a careful reading of the entire passage does not uphold such an erroneous teaching.

Let us review the entire passage of 2 Corinthians 3:3–11, in context:

“(3)... clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. (4) And we have

such trust through Christ toward God. (5) Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, (6) who has also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (7) But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, (8) how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? (9) For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. (10) For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. (11) For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.”

It is important that we carefully analyze this passage, so that we do not reach wrong conclusions.

God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai. We read in Exodus 24:1–8 that the covenant was sealed with blood. When that happened, the covenant was final and could not be altered. The law of the covenant was written in a book, the “Book of the Covenant” (verse 7; compare Hebrews 9:19–20). At that time, the sacrificial system was not a part of the Law—those ritual provisions had not been given yet—and they were not written in the Book of the Covenant. The only sacrifice that is mentioned as a required sacrifice is the Passover (Exodus 23:18; Exodus 12). Yet, even this Passover sacrifice found its fulfillment in the death of Jesus Christ. Christians do not now offer lambs in sacrifice for Passover—rather, Paul shows: “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

But ritual laws were added at the time of Moses, including the laws regarding the Levitical priesthood and penalties, or curses, for violations of God’s spiritual Law, and those did find their way into the Book of the Covenant, which is also called the Book of the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 28:58, 61; 29:20–21, 27, 29; 31:9). This Book of the Law was placed outside or beside the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 31:24–26). The tablets with the Ten Commandments, however, were placed inside the ark (Deuteronomy 10:4–5; Hebrews 9:4).

Later, all the laws that had been written by Moses into the Book of the Law were engraved on massive stones (Deuteronomy 27:2–3, 8; Joshua 8:30–32, 34). The laws that were written on the stones included the Ten Commandments, along with the statutes and judgments, and also the rules and regulations regarding sacrifices and other rituals. We find a reference to those stones and the laws that had been engraved on them in 2 Corinthians 3:7–8, “But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious... how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?”

The reference to the ministry of death includes the death penalty for violating God’s spiritual Law. The penalties were first written in the Book of the Law of Moses and then engraved on massive stones. Since Christ died for us, we don’t have to pay the death penalty, if we repent of our sins and obtain forgiveness.

The ritual sacrificial laws, which were among the laws written on stones, could not forgive sins—they only reminded the sinners of their sins. The Levitical priesthood was, in that sense, a ministry of death, as people would still not be able to obtain eternal life, even though they brought sacrifices.

With this background, let us again carefully review verses 3 and 7 of 2 Corinthians 3. In verse 3, reference is made to the Ten Commandments, which were written “on tablets of stone.” Christians today are to keep the Ten Commandments in their hearts; that is to say that it is not sufficient to possess tablets of stone which include the Ten Commandments, but rather that we have to internalize them and obey them “from the heart.”

Verse 7, however, does NOT refer specifically or exclusively to the Ten Commandments. As stated above, the “ministry of death, written and engraved on STONES,” refers to massive stones (compare again Deuteronomy 27:2–3, 8; Joshua 8:30–32, 34) on which ALL of God’s laws were written—not just the Ten Commandments, which are spiritual and eternal, but also temporary ritual laws regarding washings and sacrifices. While the two tablets with the Ten Commandments did not include any penalties, the subsequent massive stones did.

Let us compare the different Greek words which are used in verses 3 and 7, when describing the “tablets of stone” (referring to the Ten

Commandments) and the “ministry of death... engraved on stones” (referring to the entire law, including physical temporary regulations pertaining to sacrifices and washings).

The Greek word for “of stone” in verse 3 is, “*lithinos*” (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, No. 3035), and means, literally, “made of stone” or formed out of stones. The word is used in Revelation 9:20, describing idols made out of stone. The Greek word for engraved “on stones,” in verse 7, is, “*lithos*” (*Strong’s* No. 3037), and it describes complete stones—not something made of stone. It is also rendered as “millstone” in Luke 17:2. The tablets with the Ten Commandments were taken from stones—the tablets did not constitute complete stones. But later, all of God’s laws—permanent as well as temporary rules—were engraved on complete, massive stones. To reiterate: The Ten Commandments were written on TABLETS OF STONE—the laws of the Book of Moses, including the penalties for sin, were engraved on COMPLETE, MASSIVE STONES.

The Ten Commandments, as well as other permanent and temporary laws, were WRITTEN in a book—the Book of the Law of Moses. Verse 7 makes reference to this fact, when it says, “...WRITTEN and engraved on stones.” Quite literally, the meaning is that all of the laws were first “reduced to writing” (“*en grammasin*” in Greek) and then “engraved” (“*entupoo*” in Greek) “on stones” (“*en lithos*” in Greek).

Thus, 2 Corinthians 3:7–8 could be paraphrased as follows, to clarify the intended meaning:

“But if the ministry of death, which was first written in the Book of the Law of Moses and later engraved on massive stones, was glorious, even though it would cease one day—so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance (after he saw God’s form), which glory also passed away—how will the ministry of the Spirit, which will endure forever, not be more glorious?”

God’s true ministers today do not administer the death penalty for sin—they do not fulfill the ancient Levitical priesthood’s role and function of a “ministry of condemnation” (2 Corinthians 3:9). Rather, God’s true ministry today teaches that sinful man can receive forgiveness of sin through the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God’s ministry today

also teaches that man must keep the Ten Commandments. Man can only do this, however, through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within him, which is received after repentance, belief, baptism and the laying on of hands by God's true ministers. In other words, God's ministry is a "ministry of righteousness" (2 Corinthians 3:9), teaching man how to obtain righteousness and how to live righteously.

2 Corinthians 3:2–11 does not teach that the Ten Commandments are abolished. Quite to the contrary, the passage teaches that the Ten Commandments must be kept today, including the Sabbath commandment.

They must, however, be kept in the Spirit; that is, they must be applied in our lives with their spiritual intent, as Christ clearly explained in Matthew 5–7. In doing so, we can escape death and inherit eternal life. **If we refuse to do so**, Christ's warning in John 3:36 is still applicable for us today: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him (*Revised Standard Version*)."

But—Didn't Paul say that all that is required is to believe in Jesus? Therefore, isn't it true, then, that the keeping of the Sabbath is no longer necessary?

It is, indeed, correct that Paul told the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." And it is also true that we **MUST** believe in Christ, as only in His name can we find salvation (compare Acts 4:12). However, Paul **did not say that belief in Christ is ALL that we must have**. Rather, **belief in Christ is only the starting point**. Notice how the record in Acts 16 continues, in verses 32–33:

"Then they [Paul and Silas] spoke the **WORD** of the **LORD** to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes [The jailer responded to Paul's teaching of the Word of God by showing kindness to Paul.] And immediately he and all his family were baptized [They had repented of their sins and showed their faith by baptism, so that they could receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit, compare Acts 2:38]."

Paul did not preach, and the jailer did not understand him to preach, that **ALL** that was required of him was simply to believe that

Jesus was the Christ. Rather, his belief had to be accompanied by obedience to Christ's words, as manifested by his actions.

Jesus tells us in John 15:14: "You are My friends if you DO whatever I COMMAND you." He continued in verse 17: "These things I COMMAND you, that you LOVE one another."

The jailer showed LOVE to Paul when he washed his stripes and gave him food to eat (Acts 16:33–34). Paul tells us in Romans 13:8–10 that when we love each other, we FULFILL God's LAW of love. He says in verse 9: "For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

In other words, if we LOVE our neighbor enough so that we don't kill him or steal from him, or lie to him or about him, or covet what he has, or commit adultery with his wife [which are all injunctions contained in the Ten Commandments], we FULFILL God's Law. We read in 1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments." 1 John 3:23 explains: "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, AND LOVE one another."

As discussed before, when a young man asked Christ what to do to inherit eternal life, Christ told him: "But if you want to enter into life, KEEP [or OBEY] the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). He proceeded to list some of the Ten Commandments to show which commandments He was talking about (verses 18 and 19). And James would later explain that we break ALL of the Ten Commandments when we break even one of them (James 2:8–11). As the Ten Commandments define love to God and neighbor, we don't show the love of God in our lives when we transgress His Law.

Paul did not tell the Philippian jailer that all he had to do was just believe in Jesus Christ. James tells us that even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). Rather, Paul was teaching that we need to OBEY God, once we come to believe in Him.

We read Paul's word in Romans 1:5: "Through Him we have received grace and apostleship FOR OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH."

He also stated in Romans 16:26: "... [the mystery] has been made manifest... according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for OBEDIENCE TO THE FAITH."

Acts 6:7 reports about the beginning of the New Testament Church: "Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH."

As quoted before, we read in John 3:36 (correctly translated from the Greek, compare the *Revised Standard Version*): "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does NOT OBEY the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him."

When the Bible talks about the right kind of faith needed to inherit eternal life, it equates faith with obedience. Faith alone in Christ, which does not manifest itself in an obedient lifestyle to God's Law, is NOT enough.

In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 2:8 that God will pour out "indignation and wrath" on those who "are self-seeking and do NOT OBEY the truth, but obey unrighteousness." And "truth" is defined as "all Your commandments" (Psalm 119:151). Paul reiterates in 2 Thessalonians 1:8 that God will take "vengeance on those who... do NOT OBEY the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." In Romans 6:17, 22, Paul states: "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin [remember, sin is defined as the "transgression of the LAW," 1 John 3:4, *Authorized Version*], yet you OBEYED from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered... having become SLAVES of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and THE END, everlasting life." The *New International Version* renders Romans 6:22 in this way: "But now that you... have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."

Further proof that our faith must be accompanied by OBEDIENCE can be found in Peter's first letter. Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:2 to the "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, FOR THE OBEDIENCE and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." He continues in verse 22: "Since you have purified your souls in OBEYING THE TRUTH through the Spirit in SINCERE LOVE of the brethren, LOVE one another fervently with a pure heart."

Peter also admonished the brethren to conduct themselves as “OBEDIENT CHILDREN, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (verses 14–15). Again, in 1 Peter 4:17, we are warned about the fate of those who do “NOT OBEY the gospel of God.”

We will only inherit salvation and eternal life, if we obey God! This is very clearly expressed in Hebrews 5:8–9 where we read that even Christ “learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation TO ALL WHO OBEY HIM.”

Just as Christ obeyed God’s commandments, so must we (John 15:10). Only if we DO the will of our Father in heaven, that is, only if we cease practicing lawlessness, will we enter God’s Kingdom (Matthew 7:21–23). The MERE confession that we believe in Christ, will NOT be enough (verse 21)!

Peter made it very clear that we must obey God at all times, even if that means—in rare instances—disobeying man (Acts 5:29). Normally, we must of course obey and be subject to governing authorities (compare Romans 13:1–7). Peter also clarified that God will give His Spirit—which is a guarantee that we WILL inherit eternal life (Ephesians 1:13–14)—only to those who OBEY God (Acts 5:32).

If we want to inherit eternal life, we must obey the Ten Commandments—including the Sabbath commandment.

Paul Commands God’s People to Keep the Weekly Sabbath

The account in Hebrews 3 and 4 speaks about the failure of ancient Israel to enter the Promised Land of Canaan, and the fact that Christians must be careful to avoid making the same mistakes, so that they CAN enter the future Millennial rest—the spiritual Promised Land, so to speak. At the same time, Paul draws an additional analogy between the weekly Sabbath and the Millennial rest at the end of man’s rule, comparing the coming Millennial rest with a Millennial “Sabbath” of 1000 years. Several Scriptures indicate a 7000-year plan of God, which is comprised of a “week” of seven 1000-year “days.” God gave man about 6000 years (or six “days” of 1000-years each) to prove that man, under Satan’s influence, cannot

rule himself. These first six “days” of 1000 years each will be followed by the seventh “day” of 1000 years, called the Millennium, during which Christ and His elect will rule this earth (compare Revelation 20:4–6; 2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4).

In Hebrews 3, Paul addresses ancient Israel’s disobedience in the wilderness, under the direction of Moses. Moses “was faithful in all his house” (Hebrews 3:2)—but the Israelites hardened their hearts (v. 8), and did not enter God’s physical rest of the Promised Land of Canaan at that time (v. 11). Rather, their corpses fell in the wilderness (v. 17) because of their “evil heart of unbelief” (v. 12) and because of their disobedience (vv. 18–19). Paul warns us that we could fall, if we are not careful (v. 12), although we are today led by Jesus Christ who is Head over His house—“whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” (v. 6).

Using this analogy, Paul goes on to tell us in Hebrews 4:1 that “a promise remains of entering His rest.” Although Joshua did lead ancient Israel into the Promised Land of Canaan (Hebrews 4:8), this entrance was only a forerunner, which foreshadowed the final Millennial rest still ahead of us. Paul points out that even after ancient Israel had entered the Promised Land of Canaan under Joshua, David still spoke of a future rest (v. 7)—the rest of the Millennium when God rules here on this earth through His Son, Jesus Christ, and through the Church of God, then made immortal.

We also have a rest on a weekly basis—the weekly Sabbath. Paul states that as God rested from His work on the seventh day (Hebrews 4:4), so man is to rest from his work on the weekly Sabbath, and during the Millennial Sabbath at the end of man’s worldly rule—when the first 6000 years of God’s plan for creation have expired. Just as the weekly seventh day of God’s re-creation ended God’s work, so the weekly Sabbath is a commanded rest from our work, and the Millennial Sabbath of 1000 years will end the rule of man, presently under Satan’s influence, to be replaced by God’s rule. (For proof that Genesis 1:2–31; 2:3 describe the re-creation of the earth—and not its original creation—please read our free booklet, “*The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?*”)

In this context, Paul states that we must continue to keep the

weekly Sabbath (Hebrews 4:9), since it foreshadows the Millennial rest to come.

Hebrews 4:9 reads, correctly translated, “It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath” (*Lamsa*). While Paul does say that we need to rest on the weekly Sabbath, he also mentions a future, permanent rest in verse 11: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that [final] rest.” He is still speaking of a future rest (“*katapausis*” in Greek), but he tells us at the same time that we can experience a foretaste of this future rest on a weekly basis when we keep the Sabbath (“*sabbatismos*” in Greek, in Hebrews 4:9). This weekly Sabbath rest foreshadows the Millennial rest still to come, and it points back to God’s rest during the re-creation week. We can already cease today from our work on a weekly basis when we keep the Sabbath, looking forward to the time when the whole world will be able to enjoy a life of peace and “rest” from hate, strife and war.

Paul’s point is this: When we do not keep the weekly Sabbath, we are not being diligent to enter the real rest yet to come (vv. 9, 11). We will make the same mistake as ancient Israel did. We will endanger ourselves to “fall according to the same example of disobedience” (v. 11).

On the other hand, if we rest from our work on a weekly basis, by keeping the Sabbath, just as God rested from His work during the week of re-creation, we will ultimately enter God’s final rest. When we have entered that final rest (“*katapausis*” in Greek), we will have been made immortal, and we will have completely ceased from “our” human works, as God did cease from His works on the first weekly Sabbath—at the end of the re-creation week (v. 10).

Weekly Sabbath to Be Kept From Sunset to Sunset

Even though our Western societies reckon days from midnight to midnight, and some even define a day as the period from morning to night, this is a purely human invention. The Bible is very clear that days are to be counted from sunset to sunset. For instance, the Sabbath, the last day of the week, is to be counted from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

God has revealed in His Word exactly when the Sabbath starts and when it ends. God reckons each day—including the Sabbath—

beginning at sunset and continuing until the following sunset. Today, we would say that the Seventh-Day Sabbath starts Friday evening, when the sun sets, and lasts until Saturday evening, at sunset.

We know from the Jewish people when to keep the Sabbath. It is the Jews to whom God committed His revelations or His “oracles,” as Paul clearly explains in Romans 3:1–2. These “oracles of God” included the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as the knowledge of the week and of the Sacred Calendar. The Jews preserved the knowledge of which day is the seventh day of the week. Without an understanding of when a week begins and ends, we would not have been able to tell, from the Bible alone, which day the seventh day of the week actually is. Today, the Jews keep the Sabbath on Saturday, beginning Friday evening, at sunset. Nobody questions today that the Sabbath, as preserved by the Jews, is the seventh or last day of the week. All understand that Sunday is the first day of the week—although there have been some attempts in Europe to actually change the calendar in order to deceitfully pretend as if Sunday, and not Saturday, was the seventh day of the week.

The Bible reveals that days start and end at sunset, in the evening. Notice Genesis 1:5: “God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.” Note the comment by the *Ryrie Study Bible* to this passage: “... Jewish reckoning began the day with eventide (Lev. 23:32). This may be the reason for the order here...”

Many Scriptures associate the meaning of the word “evening” with “sunset.” For instance, a period of one day regarding a ritualistic, temporary law is noted in Leviticus 22:6–7: “The person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening... And when the sun goes down he shall be clean.” (Note the same definition in 2 Samuel 3:35.) Further, we are told in Leviticus 23:32 to keep God’s Sabbath “from evening to evening.”

In regard to the meaning of “evening,” also notice Deuteronomy 16:6: “... at the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover, at twilight [lit., between the two evenings], at the going down of the sun...” The first evening—when days start and end—is sunset. The second evening is nightfall, when it is really dark. The Passover had to be

sacrificed on the 14th day of the first month, at twilight—between the two evenings—“at the GOING DOWN OF THE SUN.”

Rienecker’s *Lexikon zur Bibel* [“Rienecker”] correctly explains, under “evening”: “Until evening (Leviticus 15:5; Judges 20:26) means the entire day, as the new day begins with sunset.”

Rienecker explains, under “day”: “The day as part of the week and the month... lasted for the Israelites from one sunset to the next sunset (Exodus 12:18; Leviticus 23:32); within this unity the hours of the night preceded the daylight hours (compare ‘evening-mornings’ [in] Daniel 8:14; compare the Greek word ‘nychthaemeron,’ literally ‘Night-Day,’ = the time of 24 hours, 2 Corinthians 11:25).”

The biblical passages of Exodus 12:18 and Leviticus 23:32, as quoted by Rienecker, establish that days start and end at SUNSET. Exodus 12:18 reads: “In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.”

Verse 19 explains that the entire duration lasted for seven days, that is, from the evening (or sunset) of the fourteenth day (when the fifteenth day started) until the evening of the twenty-first day (when that day ended and the twenty-second day started). The seven days of unleavened bread FOLLOW the Passover, which is to be observed on the 14th day—from the beginning of the fourteenth day, at sunset, until the end of the fourteenth day, at sunset (compare Exodus 12:6). Notice that the Passover falls on the fourteenth day (from sunset to sunset), but that the Days of Unleavened Bread begin on the fifteenth day—24 hours later (Numbers 28:16–17).

Leviticus 23:32 describes the annual Holy Day of Atonement, which the Jews today call Yom Kippur. It is stated: “It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest; and you shall afflict your souls [i.e., fast]; on the ninth day of the month at evening, FROM EVENING TO EVENING, you shall celebrate your Sabbath.” The New International Version renders this verse: “... From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your Sabbath.”

But, this entire period, from the evening or sunset of the ninth day, until the evening or sunset of the tenth day, is defined as “the tenth

day,” as Leviticus 23:27 clearly shows: “Also the TENTH day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement.” This proves that the Bible reckons days from evening or sunset to evening or sunset.

It is clear from the biblical record that according to God, days are counted from sunset to sunset—and not from midnight to midnight, or by any other method. Therefore, we are to keep His Holy Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

God's Annual Holy Days

The Bible teaches that we are to observe certain weekly and annual Holy Days, during which time we are to attend Church services and to refrain from secular labor, including school, college or university attendance, and we are to dedicate and devote our time and our minds to worship, spiritual study, prayer, fellowship with Church members, and physical rest. We are setting forth below, in a very brief summary, these weekly and annual Holy Days:

The Weekly Sabbath

The seventh-day weekly Sabbath is observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. The day symbolizes God resting on the seventh day—after having recreated the surface of the earth in six days—as well as the forthcoming Millennium, which is also referred to as a Sabbath that will last for 1,000 years (Leviticus 23:3; Exodus 20:8–11, Hebrews 4:3–11).

Passover

The Passover is observed once a year, in the evening, by engaging in a footwashing service as an example of humility in accordance with Christ's example, and by partaking of unleavened bread and wine, which symbolize physical and spiritual healing, as well as forgiveness of sin. The entire service symbolizes a remembrance of Christ's death (Leviticus 23:5, Luke 22:14–20; John 13:1–5; 1 Corinthians 11:20–29).

The Days of Unleavened Bread

The Days of Unleavened Bread are observed once a year by not partaking of any food prepared with leavening for a period of seven days following the Passover. This partaking of unleavened bread symbolizes the commitment to live a sinless life (Leviticus 23:6–8; Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:7–8, showing that leaven can symbolize sin).

Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost is observed once a year. This day symbolizes the coming of God's Holy Spirit for the purpose of converting

those who are called by God at this time (Leviticus 23:15–16, 21; Acts 2:1–4; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8).

The Feast of Trumpets

The Feast of Trumpets is observed once a year. This day symbolizes the soon coming return of Jesus Christ to this earth (Leviticus 23:24–25; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16), and also our resurrection and change to immortality—to be born again into the Kingdom or Family of God (1 Corinthians 15:42–54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; John 3: 3, 5–8).

Atonement

The Day of Atonement is observed once a year by refraining from partaking of any and all solid food or liquid for a period of 24 hours. This day symbolizes the time when those who are called by God during this life have received at-one-ment with God; and those who *can* receive at-one-ment with God after Christ’s return; as well as the transfer of sin to Satan as the one who is ultimately responsible for all sin (Leviticus 16:1–34; Leviticus 23:27–32; Acts 27:9—in this passage, the word “Fast” refers to the Day of Atonement, as the margin of the *New King James Bible* explains).

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles is observed once a year, for seven consecutive days, by attending one of the Church’s designated sites around the world. This period symbolizes the reign of Christ for 1,000 years—together with His saints who have been changed to immortality—during which time Satan will be bound and the entire world will be living under the government of God (Leviticus 23:33–35; Daniel 7:27; John 7:2–8, 10–14; Revelation 20:4).

The Last Great Day

The Last Great Day, which immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles, is observed once a year. This day symbolizes a 100-year period called the “Great White Throne Judgment,” during which ALL persons who have ever lived and who were not called by God for salvation during this life, will have their *first opportunity* to

accept Christ as their Savior (Leviticus 23:36; John 7:37; Revelation 20:11–12). At the end of that period, there will be a judgment during which all people who have ever lived and who have refused to accept Christ as their Savior, will be finally condemned to eternal death and destroyed in Gehenna fire. They will not live in eternal torment, but they will be burned up (Revelation 20:13–15). For more information on God’s annual Holy Days, please read our free booklets, “*God’s Commanded Holy Days*,” “*The Meaning of God’s Spring Holy Days*” and “*The Meaning of God’s Fall Holy Days*.”

But—Are the annual Holy Days really still to be observed today? Were they not part of the sacrificial system, which has been done away?

Some claim that we don’t have to keep God’s annual Holy Days any more because they were supposedly part of the sacrificial system, and when that system was done away, the Holy Days were done away as well.

Note the error of that argument in reading Jeremiah 7:22–23: “For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.’”

God did not establish a sacrificial system for them at the time He brought them out of Egypt. **The sacrificial system was instituted some time after God spoke the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.** God DID command them, when He brought them out of Egypt, to walk in ALL His ways. God commanded them—while they were still in Egypt—to keep the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread from then on. Therefore, God’s annual commanded convocations and His Holy Days are clearly different from the sacrifices and must still be kept today by God’s people.

We should point out here that, later on, sacrifices were not only given on the annual Holy Days, but also on the weekly Sabbath, and, as a matter of fact, on every day—in the morning and in the evening. Those who claim that the annual Holy Days do not have

to be kept today because they were part of the sacrificial system [which they were not], yet still keep the weekly Sabbath [although sacrifices were given on that day as well], *do* have a problem with consistency. So do those who keep Sunday “holy,” as sacrifices were also given on that day.

The weekly Sabbath *and* all of God’s annual Holy Days stand and fall together. They are all part of the same package. We read in Leviticus 23:1–2: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.”’” Note that all the Holy Days that follow (including the annual Passover) are designated as the “feasts of the Lord.” They are ALL holy convocations.

In addition, some of the annual Holy Days are specifically called “Sabbath.” In reference to the Feast of Trumpets, God says in Leviticus 23:24: “Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.’” In the original Hebrew, the word for “sabbath-rest” is “*shabbathon*,” meaning “Sabbath” (*Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*). The *Authorized Version* translates this word correctly with “sabbath.” The above-cited rendering of the *New King James Bible*, “sabbath-rest,” does convey, quite accurately, the intended meaning of the word “Sabbath.”

We find that Leviticus 23:27 and 32 also describe the annual Holy Day of Atonement as a “Sabbath.” We read in the *Authorized Version*: “Also unto the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls... It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

Notice a third example in Leviticus 23:39, which refers to the annual Holy Days of the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last or Eighth Day: “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath” (*Authorized Version*).

As mentioned earlier in this booklet, the First Day of Unleavened

Bread—an annual Holy Day—was also referred to as “Sabbath,” in John 19:31.

We see, then, that God’s annual Holy Days, as well as the weekly Sabbath, must be observed by true Christians today. Note, as further proof, the additional facts presented in the following sections.

Jesus Christ Kept the Annual Holy Days

Those who proclaim to be followers of Christ, yet claim that they do not need to keep the weekly Sabbath, nor the annual Holy Days, should think about the fact that Jesus Christ Himself kept both the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days. We are specifically told in John 2:13 and in Luke 22:1–15 that Christ kept the Passover. We are also told in John 7:2–14 that Christ kept the Feast of Tabernacles. In addition, John 7:37–39 points out that He kept the Last Great Day—“the last day, that great day of the feast.” Since Christ kept these annual Holy Days, in addition to the weekly Sabbath, there is no reason to assume that He did not keep the other Holy Days as well.

The Early Apostles Kept the Annual Holy Days

After Christ’s death and resurrection, the apostles and the New Testament Church followed Christ’s example and continued to observe the annual Holy Days. We are specifically told that the early Church kept the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:6–8). We are also told that Luke wrote the book of Acts to Theophilus, a *Gentile*, who had become a Christian. Luke makes reference, in Acts 12:3–4 and Acts 20:6, to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. When Luke wrote this, he took it for granted that Theophilus—a Christian with a Gentile background—knew about these annual Holy Days. If the Gentiles were not required to keep those days, Luke’s reference to these days in a report to a former *Gentile* would make little sense.

We can also clearly see from the Bible that the New Testament Church kept the Feast of Pentecost. Acts 2:1 reports that it was on the day when the Church was assembled together, that they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. We read in Acts 20:16 that Paul wanted to keep the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. He had kept it all along, whether in Jerusalem or not. He would still have kept it, of course,

even if he had not been able to arrive in Jerusalem on time.

The early Church continued to keep the Day of Atonement as well. In Acts 27:9, we find a reference to “the Fast.” This describes the Day of Atonement, as the margin of the *New King James Bible* points out. It also gives parallel Scriptures from Old Testament passages that deal with the Day of Atonement. (The Scriptures quoted in the margin are Leviticus 16:29–31; 23: 27–29; and Numbers 29:7.)

Annual Holy Days Will Be Kept in the Future

Looking to the future, through God’s Word, we can see that His annual Holy Days *will* be kept by all of mankind.

In the Millennium, God will deal with those nations and peoples who refuse to keep His Holy Days. Zechariah 14:16–19 describes, in very vivid terms, the punishment of nations and individuals in the Millennium who refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles: “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations... shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 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. 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. 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.”

Yes, the Feast of Tabernacles will be kept by everyone—not only by the Jews!

The Bible clearly reveals then, that the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days of God, are to be kept by true Christians today.

But—Isn’t Colossians 2:16–17 proof that the weekly and annual Sabbaths are no longer binding today?

In the *New King James Bible*, Colossians 2:16–17 reads as follows: “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival [margin: “feast day”] or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

Does this passage mean that the Christians in Colossae **did not**

keep the Sabbath or the Holy Days, and that Paul was essentially telling them not to worry about the fact that they **didn't keep** them?

Let's first look at the phrase, "the substance **is** of Christ." The word "is" is not in the Greek. It was *added by the translator* in an attempt to make the meaning clearer; however, this addition has, to the contrary, confused and perverted the meaning. Without the word "is" in that particular phrase, it simply states, "...but the substance of Christ." What is the substance of Christ?

The Body of Christ

The literal meaning for the word "substance" is "body." The Greek word here is "*soma*" and is otherwise translated as "body" throughout the New Testament, and especially in the letter to the Colossians (Notice, for instance, Colossians 1:18; 1:24; 2:19; and 3:15).

With that understanding, let us turn again to Colossians 2:16–17, where Paul says: "Let no one judge you... regarding a festival or Sabbaths... but the body of Christ." In other words, let no one, except the body of Christ—the Church—judge in those matters. The Church—the body of Christ—the preserver of the truth—CAN, and should, judge in that regard.

The Colossians were criticized by their opponents, not by Paul, when **they kept** the Sabbath and the Holy Days (Note that Paul refers to "Sabbaths"; that is, to *both* the *weekly* and the *annual* Sabbath or Holy Days.) Paul is essentially saying to them: I am speaking on behalf of the Church when **I tell you that you should continue keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days**, as this is what the Church has judged and resolved to do, based on the Scriptures.

Colossae was a predominately *Gentile* city, although some Jews undoubtedly lived there as well. The Christian converts in Colossae had begun to keep the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, and Paul essentially told them: "Don't listen to your former friends and your relatives who try to convince you not to keep those 'Jewish traditions'—but rather, listen to what the Church is telling you."

A Shadow of Things to Come

What *did* Paul mean when he described these things as being a shadow of things to come?

The weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days have tremendous meaning for us today. They *foreshadow* events to occur in the future at a time when the whole world will be ruled by Christ and taught by Him to keep God’s Law—including the weekly and annual Sabbaths—as God’s people already do today.

Rather than doing away with the keeping of the Sabbath and Holy Days, Colossians 2:16–17 teaches the exact opposite. It teaches us not to worry about people who say that we should not do so, but rather to concern ourselves with the truth of the matter, which is being taught by Christ’s Body—the Church.

How NOT to Keep the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days

Some tried to convince the Gentile Christians in Colossae to cease from keeping the weekly and annual Sabbaths. Others went to the opposite extreme—they tried to convince the Gentile Christians in Colossae that they had to fast on the weekly and annual Sabbaths.

Since both the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days are Feast days, the Christians in Colossae kept them, of course, as FEAST days. They would eat and drink on those days (except, of course, during the “Fast”—on the Day of Atonement). Some, though, apparently criticized them for that, teaching that no eating and drinking should take place on any of those days.

Colossians 2:16, correctly translated from the Greek, states: “Let no one judge you regarding eating and drinking.” Paul is addressing here the ACT of eating and drinking, not the KIND of food and drink being partaken of. Some critics felt, however, that Christians should fast on those days, rather than eating or drinking anything. Notice Paul’s reference to this kind of self-imposed ascetic, or austere, religion in Colossians 2:20–23 (“...why... do you subject yourselves to regulations—‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?”).

Paul told the Colossians to continue keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days in the same way as they were doing it, rather than listening to those who were trying to tell them not to do it at all, or not to keep them *as feast days*.

New Moon Celebrations

Some Christians teach the observance of new moon celebrations. Does the Bible enjoin Christians to follow such a practice?

According to the Hebrew calendar, a month starts with a new moon. While there are express and clear commandments in the Bible to celebrate, today, God's weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days (see the pertinent sections in this booklet), there is no command in the Bible enjoining us to celebrate, at this time, the beginning of the new months—or new moons. The early New Testament Church continued to keep and celebrate the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, but we do not have any biblical record indicating that they celebrated the new moons.

Some refer to Colossians 2:16 as proof that new moons were celebrated by Christians in New Testament times (Please see the discussion on Colossians 2:16 in this booklet). However, Paul is not talking about "new moons" in Colossians 2:16, but he is referring to a very particular new moon. This statement does not refer to just all "new moons," but to one very special annual Holy Day—the Feast of Trumpets, which fell on a new moon, and which had to be, and still has to be, observed in accordance with Biblical injunctions.

Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible points out: "**Or of the new moon...**

The new moon in the beginning of the month Tisri (October) was the beginning of their civil year, and was commanded to be observed as a festival ([Leviticus 23:24–25])."

In ancient times, some assembled on the occasion of each new moon, with the blowing of trumpets signifying the beginning of a month (Numbers 10:10). Calendars were not available to everyone in ancient Israel the way we have them today. Rather, the priesthood was entrusted with the responsibility to determine when a new month would start, and then make it known to the people.

Some form of ceremony took place on the day of a new moon to let the people know that a new month had begun. Some used the occasion to have a feast on that day (1 Samuel 20:5, 18, 24), although, as mentioned, the Bible nowhere commands that new moons have to be celebrated in that way. We read that offerings were to be given on new moons (2 Chronicles 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Nehemiah 10:33), but such offerings (sacrifices) are, of course, no longer required today. Even in ancient Israel, we do not find that God commanded the celebration of new moons, per se, that is, unconnected to the giving of sacrifices. On the other hand, we do find that the keeping of the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days was set in place *before the sacrificial*

system was introduced, and that they are to be kept today, even though sacrifices are no longer necessary

It was, however, necessary in ancient times to somehow mark the beginning of the month, as it was not always easy for everyone to independently observe the new moon, due, perhaps, to clouds or heavy rain. **By actually conducting a certain ceremony at the appearance of a new moon, the general population was sufficiently informed so as to prepare for any approaching seasons or annual Holy Days, which are counted and determined by the appearance of the new moon.** For instance, as mentioned, the annual Feast of Trumpets is celebrated on a new moon (compare Psalm 81:3)—the first day of the month. Ten days later, the annual Day of Atonement is kept, and then the annual Feast of Tabernacles begins fifteen days after the Feast of Trumpets.

It appears that in the process of time, the ancient celebrations of new moons had reached proportions that were not accepted by God. He tells us in Isaiah 1:14, "Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them." Apparently, new moons were even observed in the same way that Sabbaths were observed, with prohibitions against engaging in merchandising (compare Amos 8:5). There is, however, no

such prohibition for new moons in Scripture.

Today, it is not necessary to mark the beginning of each new month with feast celebrations, the blowing of trumpets, or an assembly. We have calendars available that list, well in advance, the dates of the appearance of each new moon throughout the year.

It is true that the Bible indicates that at the beginning of the Millennium, new moons will be kept in conjunction with the bringing of sacrifices (Ezekiel 45:17, 46:1, 3, 6; Isaiah 66:20–23). It is clear from Scripture, however, that God does not command His people today to celebrate new moons.

Although some Christians today may feel compelled to add new moon observances and celebrations, it is not commanded, nor does it relate to the original purpose that the priesthood fulfilled in marking this time period. Furthermore, some tend to wear this added observance as a badge of self-righteousness. Extraneous observances, such as this and the recent movement to inculcate so-called "sacred names" as a part of their religious worship, are in danger of doing what Jesus Christ warned about, when He spoke of the "leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees"; that is, their "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (compare Matthew 15:3–9; 16:6, 12).

Rightly understood, Colossians 2:16–17 proves that true Christians *must continue to keep* the weekly Sabbath and God’s annual Holy Days as *Feast Days*.

But—Isn’t Romans 14:5 proof that we do not have to keep the weekly and the annual Sabbaths today?

Romans 14:5 reads: “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”

Note carefully the context here. Romans 14:2–3 is addressing the consumption of vegetables and meat (“For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables”). Some thought that they must not eat meat. They had become vegetarians for religious reasons. Part of the reason for their decision might have been that the meat, which could be purchased in the market, was probably offered to idols. Knowing this, some had a conscience problem with eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols (compare 1 Corinthians 8:1–13).

The context in Romans 14:5 is the consumption of certain foods. Paul addresses the fact that some esteem a certain day above another. In the very next verse, he shows the connection between the consumption of food and the regard for days. He says in verse 6: “He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.”

What is the connection between eating food and observing days?

The connection here is conscience. Paul talks about new Church members who still had a weak conscience and thought they had to FAST on particular days. That is, they thought they could not just fast on ANY weekday of their choice, but that it could only be done on particular designated days. (Note again verse 6, “... he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat.” The context of the discussion is FASTING.) Others understood that one can fast on ANY day of the week, and that God does not enjoin us, except for the Day of Atonement, to fast on a specific day during the week.

This is the reason Paul says, “One person esteems one day above

another; another esteems every day alike.” The context is eating and drinking and fasting. Paul is really saying in verse 6, “He who observes [or better, “regards,” as the *Authorized Version* has it] the day [as a fast day] observes [or regards] it to the Lord; and he who does not observe [or regard] the day [as a Fast day] observes [regards] it to the Lord, too, because the one who does not eat on that day, does it to the Lord, and the one who does eat on that day does it to the Lord, too, as he thanks God for the food he partakes of.” Paul’s point is to *not judge another* for the way they worship God, as long as it is done on the basis of Scripture.

Surprising as it may sound to those who read Romans 14:5 with preconceived notions, **the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days are not even addressed there.** Certain commentaries agree that Paul did *not* have the Sabbath or the Holy Days in mind when he wrote Romans 14:5. Both the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Book 10, page 146), and *Hasting’s Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, point out that Jews and Gentiles had set aside specific days on which to fast [we might think of the Pharisee in Luke 18:12, who was proud because he fasted two times a week], and that Paul was only addressing the issue of *prescribed fasting* in Romans 14:5.

But—Isn’t Galatians 4:10 proof that the weekly and the annual Sabbaths are no longer in force today?

Galatians 4:10 reads: “You observe days and months and seasons and years.”

The interpretation given by opponents of Sabbath-keeping is that Paul was rebuking the Galatians for still keeping God’s Sabbath and God’s Holy Days. Is that what Paul meant? We need to look at the context in which it was written, and we also need to notice an important principle, in order to properly understand Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Whom is Paul addressing?

When Paul addresses Jews, he says, “we,” since he himself is a Jew from the house of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). When Paul talks to Gentiles, he says, “you,” because Paul was not a Gentile. Now notice this distinction in the following examples:

- In Galatians 3:23–25, he uses the words “we” and “our” four times, referring to himself and other Jews.

- In Galatians 3:26–29, however, he uses the word “you” five times, referring to non-Jews, or Gentiles.

Returning, then, to the fourth chapter of the letter to the Galatians, we notice that the entire passage, beginning with verse 8 and including verse 10, is addressed to non-Jews or Gentiles, as Paul consistently uses the word “you.” In Galatians 4:8–9, Paul reminds the Galatians that prior to their conversion they did not know God, but instead, served pagan gods. (By contrast, when Paul addresses the Jews, he makes clear that they did know—to an extent—the true God; compare Galatians 2:15, “We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles...” Also compare Romans 9:3–5, “...my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain... the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God...”). Paul is clearly not addressing Jews in Galatians 4, but rather Gentiles.

These Gentiles had come to a knowledge of the true God upon conversion, but after that initial understanding, they returned to those “beggarly elements” (compare Galatians 4:9) that they had originally worshipped, by observing again “days and months and seasons and years” (verse 10). **This practice cannot refer to God’s Sabbath and Holy Days, as those had not even been known, let alone observed, by the Gentiles before their conversion.** Rather, Paul is talking here about **pagan** festivals and practices, which are known today or associated with Christmas, Easter or Halloween.

In addition, Paul would not be addressing God’s Sabbath and Holy Days here, as those days do not come from “beggarly elements,” but were, in fact, initiated by GOD. Paul would NEVER have said that the Sabbath or the Holy Days were derived from “beggarly elements.”

Some claim that the converted Gentiles in Galatia had begun to keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days only because *Jews* allegedly induced them to do so, and that Paul was now opposing this practice. This claim is false, however, because we read in verse 9 that the Galatians turned **AGAIN** to the weak and beggarly elements (“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you **turn again** to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you **desire again** to be in bondage?”). The Galatians had **RETURNED** to what they had done **BEFORE** they became Christians. Jewish influence on them **AFTER** their conversion is clearly **NOT** what Paul is addressing here.

What then, specifically, did Paul have in mind when speaking about the Gentile practice of “observ[ing] days and months and seasons and years”? To answer that question, we need to first consider the meaning of the word “observe.”

The Greek word for “observe” is “*paratereo*.” Some commentators point out that the “observation” that Paul is addressing here, is done in a superstitious way, which just does not fit when talking about God’s Sabbath and the Holy Days. It does, however, fit in connection with astrology and Gnostic speculations. Looking at it from that point of view, we can see that Paul was talking about an observation of times and seasons that were controlled by heavenly bodies and spirits.

Observation of Seasons or Times

Let us focus in more detail on the observation of seasons, or “times,” as more correctly translated in the *Authorized Version* (“Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years”). Looking for the biblical explanation, we will read some other Scriptures pertaining to this subject.

In Leviticus 19:26, we read, in the *Authorized Version*: “Ye shall not eat anything with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.”

We find the same prohibition in Deuteronomy 18:10, in the *Authorized Version*: “There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.” (Compare, too, Deuteronomy 18:14, *Authorized Version*).

Literally, it means, “to observe the clouds.” This practice is associated with divination by the observation of the clouds. The study of the appearance and motion of the clouds was a common way of foretelling good or bad fortune.

This superstitious observation of times was often accompanied by lighting candles and decorating the doors with garlic. Its connection was clearly demonic. Note in 2 Chronicles 33:6, in the *Authorized Version*: “[Manasseh] caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; also he observed times, and used *enchantments*, and used *witchcraft*, and dealt with a *familiar spirit [a demon]*, and with *wizards*: he wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger.”

Observation of Days

Paul also rebuked the Galatians for observing days. The Greeks, for example, did observe days to worship their dead. On those days, no work was to be done. Actually, both the Greek and the Roman calendars designated one-third of all the days as days of misfortune. On those days, one could not perform any political or legal activities and the people were supposed to abstain from any private pleasures. One was not to engage in war on those days, or marry, or travel.

Observation of Months

Paul also addressed the superstitious practice of observing months. The pagan world had set aside certain months for the worship of their gods. Pagan festivals were kept during the months of April and October to honor the goddess Apolla, while the highest Greek god, Zeus, was worshipped during the months of February and June. The month of April was also set aside for the worship of the god Artemis. The wine god, Baccus, was honored during the month of January.

Observation of Years

Finally, Paul rebuked the Galatians for the observance of years. Indeed, certain years had been set aside for worship activities by the Greeks and the Romans. For example, the Olympic Games were already being celebrated at that time in certain yearly intervals, but they were accompanied with pagan worship and rites.

In conclusion, Paul was not talking about God's Sabbath and the Holy Days; but rather, he was concerned about the Galatians returning to *pagan* worship customs—celebrating, **AGAIN**, the *heathen* days, months, seasons and years.

The testimony of the Bible—both of the Old Testament *and* the New Testament—is clear and convincing: True Christians are duty-bound to observe God's weekly and annual Holy Days. For more information on the duty of true Christians to observe, still today, the weekly and annual Sabbaths of God—and *how* to do it—please read our free booklets, “*God’s Commanded Holy Days*,” “*The Meaning of God’s Spring Holy Days*” and “*The Meaning of God’s Fall Holy Days*.”

Conclusion

In this booklet, we have presented to you the facts pertaining to *some* of MAN's more popular *holidays*, as well as ALL of GOD's *Holy Days*. While man's holidays are based on tradition—not on God's Word—that fact alone does not compel us to not keep any of them, although many of them are undoubtedly to be avoided because of their pagan origins. True Christians do have an obligation—before God—to decide which human holidays they can participate in without violating God's Word and their own individual conscience.

On the other hand, God's Holy Days are timeless, and Christians are not permitted to **refuse** to keep any of those days, as it would be blatant ***unwillingness to obey their Maker!*** All will be judged by God based on His Word—NOT based on human reasoning or societal traditions.

Do not repeat the mistake the Jews made during the time of Christ. They had done away with the commandments of God so that they could keep their own traditions. If you do that, then you will be worshipping Jesus Christ “in vain” (Mark 7:7–8).

The following booklets are available, upon request:

Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events

The Theory of Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults?

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Don't Keep Christmas

Is God a Trinity?

Do We Have an Immortal Soul?

The Keys to Happy Marriages and Families

And Lawlessness Will Abound...

The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord

God's *Commanded* Holy Days

God Is a Family

Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?

Angels, Demons and the Spirit World

Are You Already Born Again?

Sickness and Healing—What the Bible Tells Us

Jesus Christ—A Great Mystery!

Tithing—Today?

Should YOU Fight in War?

The Fall and Rise of Britain and America

Are YOU Predestined to be Saved?

The Mysteries of the Bible

Teach Us to Pray!

Human Suffering—Why...and How Much Longer?

The *Meaning* of God's Spring Holy Days

The *Meaning* of God's Fall Holy Days

The Sacrificial System and the Tabernacle In the Wilderness

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