

HOW Israel Changed God's Sabbaths

History proves that the Gentiles LOST the knowledge of the Sabbath shortly after the flood. That's why God had to reveal His Sabbaths to Israel. Now read how Israel CHANGED His Sabbaths—how the Jews invented their own traditions which Jesus condemned!

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Part III

GOD CHOSE Israel for a special mission they have failed to perform. He revealed to them His sabbath as a sign so they would never forget that He is the Creator. He also gave Israel annual Holy Days, *memorials*, to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egypt—a picture for His church of the plan of God in delivering the world from sin.

But did Israel remain faithful to these God-given Festivals? Did they invent days of their own?

Did God ever say He would abolish the days that He ordained?

WHOSE Sabbaths Does God Hate?

Hundreds of pamphlets have been written in an attempt to explain that God *abolished* His sabbath and feasts in ancient Israel. Yet many of these same tracts attempt to prove that God cruelly *punished* Israel for breaking these days.

Stop to think! Here is an obvious contradiction. Both ideas can't be right. Why would God punish a nation for refusing to observe days that supposedly had already ceased to exist? That just doesn't make sense, does it?

It's time we examined the historical evidence of the Bible instead of *assuming* fables. Did God hate the days He ordained or did He punish Israel for breaking them?

Several chapters are devoted by the prophet Ezekiel to a *condemnation of Israel for breaking the sabbaths God had given*. This is historical proof that those days were *then in existence* and that God greatly disapproved their transgression. Take special note of Ezekiel 20: 12-26 and 22:26. The punishment inflicted upon the House of Israel was for desecrating the sabbaths with idolatrous practices *sanctioned by their own human laws* that were not good.

What was the extreme evil of this sin? By breaking the sabbath, Israel was rejecting the only sign between them and God whereby they might know that He was indeed the Lord of all. With the

desecration of the sabbaths, idolatry was a natural consequence, as centuries of Israel's history demonstrated.

Ezekiel wrote this under the inspiration of God. Therefore it couldn't be, as is often falsely preached, that other inspired prophets *before him* such as Isaiah wrote that God hated His sabbaths.

Then *whose* feasts did God hate?

"YOUR Appointed Feasts My Soul Hateth"

There is no text in all the Old Testament wherein the Lord says "my" sabbaths and festivals "I hate." Critical commentators overlook the plain statement of Biblical history. The Eternal said: "I hate, I despise *your* feasts days, and . . . *your* solemn assemblies." Notice it. "*Your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts my soul hateth: for they are a trouble unto me." (Amos 5:21; 8:10; Isaiah 1:10-15; Hosea 2:11).

These were not divine institutions, but *man-appointed* days observed in Israel. *These* days God despised. Ancient Israel did *not* continue to observe the holy days of God. They refused His judgments and statutes (Ezekiel 20: 18). They copied the heathen idolatrous feasts of surrounding nations. History proves this fact!

The chronicler of ancient Israel preserved a record of just such a *change in the laws of God, when the House of Israel separated from Judah*. "And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar . . . sacrificing unto the calves that he had made . . . the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month *which he had devised of his own heart* . . ." (1 Kings 12:32, 33).

This was the initial step by which the House of Israel departed from God's laws. To keep his people from returning to Judah where the sabbaths and festivals of God were still observed, the king of the House of Israel substituted feasts of his own devising—in place of keeping holy the days God made holy.

Thereafter Israel altered the new moons, and changed the sabbaths into idolatrous days for sun-worship. One special feature should be noticed. Israel partially retained a perverted form of the original days. The heathen nations did not keep their festivals as complete rest days, but Israel, taking over the feasts of the heathen Baal—*sun-worship*—turned them into idolatrous rest days according to the statutes of the kings of Israel (2 Kings 17:8).

When the House of Israel is next found in history, as the nations of Northwestern Europe, they are keeping the day of the sun! So the Ever-Living God never hated nor abolished His feasts. But He did hate the *different* days which Israel invented!

Did Judah Remain Faithful?

The House of Israel *changed* the days God instituted. The house of Judah says the Lord also "changed my judgments into wickedness and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them" (Ezekiel 5:6).

Now notice the first chapter of Isaiah. It is addressed in particular to Judah. In this chapter it is especially mentioned that the Jews instituted their own appointed feasts and probably *added another day* to the new moon period. "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth," said the word of the Lord (Isaiah 14:1). THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF WHAT IS CUSTOMARILY CALLED "JEWISH FEASTS." Being instituted by the Jews they were naturally "Jewish."

But *nothing* is said about the Jews' instituting their own Sabbath. It is not surprising, then, that *the Jews have preserved the right Sabbath of God to our generation*. The house of Israel (the Democratic nations of the Western World) which did not keep the seventh day as the sabbath, has *never observed it since*.

Another point to note in Isaiah's account is this. The Jews not only added

their own appointed feasts and new moons, but *also retained* the Biblical ones—"the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies." These they turned into abominations and profaned by idolatry and labor. No wonder *God abhorred* THE MANNER in which the Jews treated His holy time (Isa. 1:13).

Whereas Israel changed every single day, Judah, under the guidance of a few kings who kept the correct festivals (2 Chronicles 30 and 35), was religiously divided. Some Jews remained true to the annual festivals, others kept them in vain because their hearts were not right, while yet other Jews invented their own annual occasions. The Jews never changed the sabbath, although they deliberately profaned it by work (Jeremiah 17:21-27).

For that sin, especially, they were driven out of Judea and *deprived of one of the blessings of God*—the opportunity of keeping His days. They became the property of their enemies and "the Lord . . . caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion" (Lamentations 2:6). Jeremiah does *not* joy over the abolition of the festivals, but *laments over their being forgotten*.

In the Days of Ezra and Nehemiah

Even after having to suffer the privations of war for rejecting the ways of God, the Jews did not fully learn their lesson. Those who returned to Jerusalem made a covenant not to buy on the Sabbath or holy days (Nehemiah 10:31). Yet they continued profaning these hallowed days. Here is what Nehemiah writes in his historical account:

"In those days saw I in Judah some *treading wine presses on the sabbath*, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses: as also wine, grapes, and figs, and *all manner of burdens*, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day . . . Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What *evil thing* is this that ye do, and *profane the sabbath day*? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath" (Neh. 13:15-18).

This stern rebuke of Nehemiah had a serious reaction on the carnal minded Jews after the time of Nehemiah. Instead of turning to keep the sabbath in the spirit as God intended, *the Jews soon began to formulate scores of rules of their own for its observance. This was the tradition of the elders against which Jesus spoke* (Matthew 15:3).

The beginning of this tradition is clothed in obscurity because of "the long blank in the history of the Jews which follows the time of Nehemi-

ah . . ." (Ency. Bib., p. 2425). When the observance of the sabbath comes to light somewhat before the time of Christ, it was a radically different observance than that of which Nehemiah spoke in the fifth century B.C.

Traditions in Jesus' Day

From the gospel accounts, and other historical evidences, the Jews held the following *traditions*, to enumerate but a few: no one could carry water to a thirsty animal—that would be a burden—but he could lead the animal to drink; one could relieve the distress of the ill, *but not heal*; one could not break or divide anything that was previously united, as that was a form of grinding; neither could one eat grain from the field as that was a species of threshing.

But the Jews didn't stop with this introduction of *human* traditions. After the death of Nehemiah, they *began to alter the days when the annual festivals were to be held*. By the time of Jesus the sects of Judaism were in great confusion over the passover and pentecost.

The apostle John shows that the Pharisees were holding the *Jewish* passover at a later time than did Christ (John 18:28). *The Jews in Judaea no longer observed the Biblical passover* at the beginning of the fourteenth of Nisan, as did Jesus and the Galilaeans. They held their sacrifice *toward the end of the fourteenth* and ate it on the night of the fifteenth which was really the first high day of the feast of unleavened bread.

To this day, the Jews fail to distinguish between the night of the passover (Exodus 12:22) and the night *after* the passover (Numbers 33:3; Exodus 12:42) when the Israelites left Egypt. The Jews do not keep the real passover.

The Jews were also divided over the exact date for the celebration of pentecost—the feast of firstfruits (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, article, "Pentecost"). The Jews' feast of firstfruits or pentecost was celebrated by the Pharisees on a specified day of the month. The Sadducees maintained that pentecost was on a particular day of the week, since it had to be counted (Lev. 23:15). This perversion of God's festivals deserved the name given by the gospel writers: "Jewish feasts" (John 6:4; 5:1).

How did Jesus regard these regulations? Did the teaching of Jesus indicate that he abolished these *man-made regulations* and freed the sabbath from the *bondage of tradition*? Or did he abolish the sabbath and the festivals? These questions are of major importance. In the next issue will appear the real teaching of Jesus—something very different from church doctrines today.