

# Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?

*Some brethren need to WAKE UP from their spiritual laxity and begin to perform what Jesus commanded!*

by Herman L. Hoeh

**O**UR BAPTIZING tours have discovered a dreadful spiritual condition among some brethren.

They have found, for example, that some have been carelessly neglecting Jesus' passover command: "DO this in remembrance of Me."

Some admitted they just "forgot" about the passover service. Others insisted they did not know where to purchase wine!

Brethren! IF, INDEED SOME OF YOU ARE BRETHREN, *this must not be!*

THINK of it! Some of you have supposedly ACCEPTED THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST—His PERFECT, Holy, Righteous Self, in *your* stead! You have asked your Heavenly Father to apply the sacrifice of THAT perfect Life to blot out YOUR SINS!

WHAT AN INEXCUSABLE, UNTHINKABLE, HEEDLESS, CARELESS, UNGRATEFUL ACT—to IGNORE the command of *your Saviour* to observe the commemoration of the *shedding* of that precious blood!

You who have done such a thing, I sternly REBUKE with the very indignation of Almighty God, and in the name of the Jesus Christ you have been FORGETTING!

Don't carelessly say: "I don't see as it makes any difference whether I observe these days!"

## It Does Make a Difference!

Brethren, it does make a difference! *Your eternal destiny* depends on it! You are soon—very soon—going to stand before the judgment bar of Christ. Then you won't carelessly say: "I do not think it makes much difference"; or, "Here is the way I look at my situation."

It does not matter how *you* look at it, or what you think. God says it makes a difference *with Him!* You can't treat His Son with disrespect and get away with it! There is a way that seems right to a man—to some of YOU—but the end result are the ways of *death* (Proverbs 14:12).

You will be judged by what God says—not by what you think!

But neglect of the passover service is not the only cause of spiritual lack. Many more of you have been neglecting to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. Some

living no more than 250 miles from the Tabernacle grounds claim "it is too far to go"—or they "just did not have the money."

These typical excuses are *not* valid reasons. The only reason some of you do not have sufficient money is that you have failed to save your second tithe—you have been disobedient! And as for distance—there is no distance too great to keep you from the feast *if you want to come*. Some brethren travel 2500 miles each way to attend!

The real reason why some of you have not been coming is that you are ashamed of your spiritual condition—your smoking habits you haven't overcome—your other problems. Brethren, that is just the reason you *need* the Feast of Tabernacles! You cannot afford to miss it!

I met one man last year at the feast whom I had not seen for six years! He confessed to me: "I had to come. I found myself drifting—I knew I could not continue that any longer. So I am here and will continue to be here henceforth."

Yes, it does make a difference!

## A New Testament Command

The Church of God today is a New Testament Church. Its Head, Jesus Christ, preached the New Testament gospel. Nowhere did Jesus during His entire New Testament ministry ever observe the temporary customs of the law of Moses.

Christ never once offered an animal sacrifice. Yet Christ kept the sabbath and the annual festivals—and we shall see He commanded us to do the same.

Jesus kept the feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 10, 14, 37). He set us an example that we should follow His steps! The apostle John was inspired to write: "He that saith he abideth in him (Jesus Christ) ought himself also so to walk, even as he (Christ) walked" (1 John 2:6).

Are we walking as Christ walked? Are we doing the things Christ commanded?

Jesus commanded His apostles to teach their converts "to observe ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU" (Matthew 28:20). You have been taught these things. But it

seems some have carelessly neglected to *heed* that teaching!

The apostle Paul commanded Christians to follow him as he followed Christ. What was Paul's example?

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, not only observed the sabbath and the annual festivals, *but commanded his converts to do the same!* It is in your New Testament!

So the sabbath and the annual Holy Days were not done away with after all. Of course! They originated before the law of Moses—and they now continue long after the law of Moses ceased to be binding.

But notice the examples of Scripture. Notice the inspired New Testament practice of God's Church. Notice why we do these things today!

## The New Testament PROOF

In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 we have a New Testament command to a church predominantly of Gentile origin. Notice Paul's instruction! "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump . . ." Why? Why put out leaven, the type of sin?

"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." Sin has been paid for. Christ paid for and conquered sin in the flesh! Therefore let us keep sin from recapturing us. Let us keep sin out of our lives! How? By what annual reminder? Here is the apostle's answer:

"Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven"—put away leaven out of your houses each feast—not only the physical leaven and leavening agents, but also "the leaven of malice and wickedness" and keep the feast "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

No Easter here. No Lent here. But instead the New Testament passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.

In 1 Corinthians 11:18-34 the apostle had to explain in detail how to keep the passover in the local congregation.

To these same Gentile converts at Corinth Paul writes: "For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to remain a while with you, if the Lord permit. But I will remain at Ephesus until Pentecost" (1 Cor. 16:7-8). No Hallowe'en here—or Christmas or Whitsunday! But what do we find? The

feast of Pentecost—and in the predominantly Gentile city of Ephesus!

That should not surprise us. Fifty-four days after everything that was nailed to the cross was abolished the disciples and apostles were assembled to keep the day of Pentecost! Notice Acts 2:1, "And when the day of Pentecost"—one of the annual festivals God ordained, not some pagan feast—"... when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled, all were together in the one place" (Panin trans.).

Here again is the New Testament example. What could be plainer!

Now turn to Acts 20:6. "And we"—Luke and those with him—"sailed away from Philippi"—a Gentile city—"after the days of unleavened bread..." Notice. Luke did not sail after Easter or some other pagan holiday. They sailed away after they had marked the days of unleavened bread!

#### Example of the Colossian Church

Did you know that your New Testament reveals the Gentile converts at Colosse were keeping the annual sabbaths, were following God's calendar, and rested each weekly sabbath? It is there and yet you probably have never noticed it! The very scripture most often quoted against these days is, in fact, the strongest proof they were being kept!

These Gentile converts, like the Thessalonians, "became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 2:14). The churches of God in Judaea kept these days. They followed the example of the Headquarters church in Jerusalem. And the scattered churches of God in the Gentile world followed their example!

Notice Paul's commendation of the converts at Colosse. "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ" (Col. 2:5). Paul had never seen or visited with these converts. The local church had been raised up by one of Paul's evangelists. The apostle Paul had received a glowing report of the church. The Church of God at Colosse was following Christ—doing the things He did, keeping the days He kept. They had ceased their pagan customs. They had quit their heathen practices. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he (Christ) reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable... if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel..." (Col. 1:21-23).

These Gentile converts, verse 27, had been called out of the world—called

to separate from the traditions of the world—but they still lived in a world steeped with pagan superstition and custom. They were under pressure from their neighbors to give up their newfound faith. Their Gentile neighbors did not like them taking up with Biblical practices. They did not want any "Jewish practises" developing in their community! They wanted everybody to continue with the traditions and doctrines of the pagan philosophers, whom the world respected. They weren't about to have their pagan holidays replaced by God's holy days, or their sunworship rites superseded by the weekly sabbath, or the pagan Roman calendar replaced by God's calendar.

#### Gentile Colossians Were Ascetic

Colosse was a very ascetic community. The people there did not believe in enjoying pleasure. They believed in a religion of severity. They believed in rigidly suppressing the body "in order to purify the soul." They thought that any indulgence of the senses was wrong. They fasted often, punished themselves, were vegetarians in part, refused to eat those clean meats God created for us, and thought drinking wine was terrible!

To keep everybody "in line" they brought social pressure, and instituted local "blue laws" to keep the preaching of the gospel from spreading. (See *The Church in the Roman Empire Before A.D. 170*, by W. M. Ramsay, Chapter X.) These pagan beliefs were commonly known to the heathen by the name "philosophy." Paul used this very word in Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through *philosophy* and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (or basic concepts) of the world, and not after Christ."

Philosophy was the doctrine that you could pay for your own sins by denying yourself the pleasures of the body. It was a pagan doctrine which denied the need of a Saviour. It was called philosophy because the pagan *philosophers* were responsible for its introduction. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, among others, taught that the soul was immortal, that the body was a prison house, that the soul could be released from this prisonhouse of flesh only if it were purified from any desires of the flesh.

The early Catholic writers used this same expression in their day to mean asceticism. "It was very common... to call an ascetic mode of life 'philosophical,' or 'the life of a philosopher.'... The growing sentiment had its roots partly in the prevailing ideas of *contemporary philosophy*, which instinctively emphasized strongly the dualism of spirit and matter, and the necessity

of subduing the latter to the former, and partly in the increasing moral corruptness of society." "The Neo-Platonic philosophy of the times, through its doctrine of the purification of the soul by its liberation from the body or sensuous things, taught celibacy and ascetic practices generally." (From pp. 252 and 546 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, edited by Schaff and Wace.)

Those who followed this philosophy were stern ascetics. They were the opposite of many other Gentiles who loved pleasure and indulged in the sins of the flesh, whose motto was "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Not so the Grecian Gentiles at Colosse. They severely judged their Christian neighbors for the least infraction of ascetic behavior. They did not like to see the Christians freely eating meat good for food, or drinking moderately, or keeping the sabbath and the annual festivals. That is why Paul wrote: "Let no man therefore judge you for eating or drinking, or in connection with the observance of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2:16, margin)

Here were Gentile converts, judged by relatives and neighbors, for doing the things Jesus did, Gentiles being judged for their part in the celebration of festivals commanded to be observed forever. Here were Gentiles judged for keeping holy the days God made holy! And yet this verse has been cleverly quoted by the churches to make it say the exact opposite of what it does say. It is time we noticed what this chapter really says. It is time we see for ourselves the meaning of this scripture, and quit taking for granted what it nowhere says!

#### Not Law of Moses

Probably most of us have taken for granted for years that Paul is writing about the law of Moses in Colossians—that the newly converted Gentiles there were being led into "Judaism." This is absolutely untrue! There is not one indication that there were any Jews attempting to lead Christians into Judaism. (See the plain admission of this in the Introduction to Colossians in the *International Critical Commentary*.)

Paul *does* indeed speak of Judaism in Galatians and Romans, but *not* here in the book of Colossians. Notice with your own eyes the startling proof here revealed—proof that the converted Gentile Colossians were being judged by their heathen neighbors *for keeping the days God made holy!*

Consider verse 8 again. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit"—it does *not* say the

law of Moses. It does speak of pagans who adhered to "philosophy."

Continuing: "after the rudiments (fundamental beliefs) of the world, and not after Christ." The evil doctrines Paul is condemning were of the world. The world then was a *Gentile* world. It was a pagan Roman world, filled with foolish and vain traditions. The Jews prided themselves on being racially separate from the world. The Jews thought themselves superior to the sinful Gentile world. So these traditions were Gentile traditions which Paul warns us to beware of!

Now verses 9 and on: "For in him (Christ) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." God dwelt in Christ, not in the philosophers. "And ye are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power." We are made perfect in Christ, not through asceticism and human traditions. Christ is the Head over all. He is the One we must look to, not to the highly vaunted philosophers.

"In whom (Christ) also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (verse 10). Paul elsewhere reveals we are to be circumcised "in the heart" (Romans 2:29).

Christ conquered sin in the flesh. If we surrender ourselves to Christ, He will enter into us through His Holy Spirit and clean us up, conquer our sins—circumcise our hearts or minds spiritually. Physical circumcision involves cutting away a tiny portion of flesh, but Christ circumcises the *whole body* which is full of sin. He enables us to completely cut away sin out of our lives—enables us to bury all our past sins in the waters of baptism, as you read in Col. 2:12: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God"—faith in God's ability to supply us with the Holy Spirit and raise us from a dead past to new life just as He "hath raised him (Christ) from the dead."

### Sin, Not Law, Blotted Out

"And you," Paul continues, "being dead in your sins and the UNCIRCUMCISION OF YOUR FLESH"—these people were, prior to conversion, uncircumcised Gentiles—"hath he (the Father) quickened together with him (Christ), having forgiven you all trespasses."

God forgives sin. These Gentile converts had sinned. They had been following the foul, heathenish practices of the world about them. They had been trying to pay for their own hurt consciences by penance, by asceticism. But always they had their past to live with.

No matter what they gave up or denied themselves, their consciences continued to plague them. They still weren't forgiven.

Now things were different. They had really been forgiven. They were no longer bound to their past sins. They had no longer the guilt of following human customs, human ordinances, human decrees and vanity. Their sins had been blotted out; Christ had taken them away. Every truly converted person knows what a relief it is to have his sins *blotted out* forever, never to reappear in the judgment. And it was all accomplished by Christ who "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

### What Was Nailed to the Cross?

Notice that *Christ* was nailed to the cross. *He* bore our *sins*. When He shed His blood from the cross in our stead, He thereby blotted out all our sins by paying for them in full with His own life. It is *sin* which was blotted out. Notice Acts 3:19, "that your *sins* may be *blotted out*." "Have mercy upon me," cried David, "blot out my *transgressions*. . . Hide thy face from my *sins*, and blot out all mine *iniquities*" (Psalm 51:1, 9).

Turn now to II Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Are your bad deeds covered by the blood of Christ? Are the *sins which stood against you* blotted out?

Next, read Revelation 20:12. Here is what happens in the final judgment. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened . . . and the dead were judged out of those things which were *written in the books, according to their works*."

The record of your past sins stands at this moment *against you*—unless Christ's blood covers them, blots them out. Christ died to blot out the written record of your and my guilty past. The record of our past sins has been figuratively nailed to the cross, taken out of the way.

Now we all can better understand Colossians 2:14. Notice this verse as it stands in the King James Version. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

Haven't you assumed this verse to mean God's law?—some assume the ten commandments, others the law of Moses. But look at the verse again.

What is blotted out? *SIN!* It does not say "the ten commandments." It does

not read "law of Moses," or "works of the law." It reads "handwriting of ordinances."

What "ordinances" were these?

### Sinful Pagan Customs

Let the Bible answer. Paul tells us in verses 20 to 23 of this same chapter!

"Wherefore if ye"—the Gentile converts—"be dead with Christ from the rudiments (fundamental principles or ideas) of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to *ordinances*" (verse 20). **ORDINANCES!** Notice it. But which ordinances? Notice the answer in the next verse: "(Touch not; taste not; handle not; which are all to perish with the using;) **AFTER THE COMMANDMENTS AND DOCTRINES OF MEN?**"

There you are! They were human traditions! Ways of sin! Continuing: "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in *will worship*"—pagan asceticism—"and humility, and neglecting of the body" appearing outwardly humble and self-denying, but inwardly self-righteous—"but are of no value against indulgence of the flesh" (last part from Panin trans.).

Did you catch it? These evil practices were pagan ordinances, or customs of men—based on the commandments and doctrines of pagan speculative philosophy. They were *heathen* ordinances, *heathen* customs forbidding people from touching, tasting and handling those things God allows. We see the same customs today: don't dance, don't drink, etc. in pseudo-Christianity today!

Those heathen Gentiles at Colosse did not want *the righteousness of God*. They wanted *their own* righteousness. "Don't eat this! Don't drink that! Don't touch something else." In other words, a pagan religion of "don'ts!"

So the original inspired Greek for "handwriting of ordinances" is not even referring to Moses' laws! In fact this is not a proper translation! The original Greek reads *cheirographon tois dogmasin*. It does not mean a code of laws.

The Greek word for "handwriting" originally referred to "a note of hand, or writing in which one acknowledges that money has either been deposited with him or lent to him by another, to be returned at an appointed time." (From Thayer's *Lexicon*.)

It came later to refer to any acknowledgment of debt. We all owe a spiritual debt to God because of sin. We have all sinned and must pay that penalty or have Christ pay it for us. That is the meaning of the word "handwriting" here—an acknowledgment of debt. But how was it originally incurred? What did the Colossians do that brought on

that debt of sin? The answer is in verse 13. What was blotted out were *trespasses* (verse 13, last part) incurred through following *sinful ordinances*, believing *lying dogmas*—like the doctrine of the immortality of the soul which was at the root of pagan asceticism!

Nothing is said here about any "law of Moses." Those Gentiles had never heard of or kept *that* law!

So the written record of *sins* which were blotted out involved the frightful practice of evil pagan ordinances for which Christ paid the penalty and God forgave us.

### How Colossians OBEYED

The Colossians had been taught the gospel. They obeyed it. They were doing the things Christ did. Christ was living His life in them as they yielded to Him. They were being knit together in love (Col. 2:2). Love is the *fulfillment of the law* (Romans 13:10). The Colossians were *keeping* God's law. Like other Gentiles they had not heard of God's law before it was preached to them. (See Romans 2:12,13.) They did not know the way of love. But now they not only knew it, they were practicing it!

They were no longer ascetics, trying to conquer the flesh by themselves. They were conquering themselves through the Holy Spirit. But God gives His Holy Spirit only to those "who OBEY Him" (Acts 5:32). Because the Colossian Christians were obeying God, it made their neighbors feel self-condemned and inferior. Their neighbors began sitting in judgment of them—condemning them—for following the ways of Christ which they had newly learned. And what were these Christians being judged for? Notice it! It was not for keeping Christmas and Easter and Sunday—pagan holidays, not for abstinence from certain foods and alcohol! No indeed! But—notice it:

"Let no man therefore judge you in eating and drinking" (margin)—the Colossians were no longer ascetics—"or in connection with the observance of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths."

That is what they were being judged for—"in connection with the observance" (as Moffatt translates it)—of God's festivals, His calendar measured by the new moon, and the sabbath!

The once-pagan Colossians never kept these days before! They were heathen prior to conversion. Now that they had learned the gospel, they were keeping holy the days God made holy. And Paul is warning them not to return to or be influenced by their old pagan ways—the ways of their relatives and neighbors who hated God's law and His festivals.

For years most of us have taken for granted that these verses in Colossians were speaking of the law of Moses and rituals and sacrifices. They are not!

There is nothing here about the ceremonial law—about animal sacrifices and drink offerings.

The original Greek is *en broosei* and *en posei* and means "in eating and in drinking." It does not mean meat and drink offerings. Every competent scholar acknowledges this to be true—yet they *assume* it does not mean eating and drinking but sacrificial rituals!

No, these verses are speaking of the Christian liberty to enjoy life! Jesus came eating and drinking (Matthew 11:19 and Luke 7:34). Jesus set us the example. He was no ascetic! And neither were the Colossian Christians any longer! They were daily enjoying the Christian life in temperance and self-control, and especially in connection with each feast, every new month and the weekly sabbaths!

### What Did They Foreshadow?

Now notice verse 17. "Which are shadows of things to come . . ." Or, better translated, "which foreshadow things to come." Did these scriptural days foreshadow things to come? Indeed!

Does the weekly sabbath foreshadow good things to come? Indeed it does! Not only is the weekly sabbath a memorial of creation—but it also foreshadows the seventh 1000-years in which man shall rest from his labors of sin. In speaking of the *seventh day of the week*, in Hebrews 4:4, the apostle Paul goes right on to show that that day foreshadows God's thousand year millennial rest. But does that do away with the weekly sabbath? Not at all! "There *remaineth* therefore *the keeping of a sabbath* to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9, margin). Sabbath-keeping is a TEST OF OBEDIENCE. No one shall enter into an eternal rest unless he first, here and now, is willing to enter into the rest of each sabbath, each seventh day of the week. And that is exactly what the Colossians were doing—observing the weekly sabbaths.

In like manner the annual festivals, instituted as *memorials*, also foreshadow the plan of God. They were given to the Church in order to keep the Church in the knowledge of that plan.

Only one festival has been entirely fulfilled in type—the passover. Yet Jesus said that each year we are to celebrate it again: "DO THIS in remembrance of Me."

Seventh Day Adventists and other groups claim that Colossians 2:16 refers "to annual feasts, new moons, and annual sabbaths"—not to the weekly sabbaths.

'THIS IS NOT TRUE! Whenever the expression "sabbath days" is used *with* "holy days" and "new moons," the WEEKLY sabbaths are *always* meant! There is no exception. Read I Chr. 23:31; II Chr. 2:4; 31:3; Ezra 3:5; Neh. 10:33.

All annual holy days are annual sabbaths!

Notice that in all these verses the weekly sabbaths are referred to *in the plural* just as in Colossians 2:16! Col. 2:16 includes *both* weekly and annual sabbaths! If it abolishes one, it abolishes the other. But as it establishes one, *so it establishes the other as New Testament practice.*

### The Body of Christ

"Let no man therefore judge you" in these matters, said Paul, "but (rather) the body of Christ" (Col. 2:17, last part).

This verse has troubled many. Yet it should not. Notice that the word "is" in the King James Version is in italics. It does not appear in the original. The original Greek says only: "the body of Christ." What is the body of Christ? How does Paul use this expression in Colossians?

Turn to chapter 1. In verse 18 we find that Christ "is the Head of the body, *the church*." And in Col. 2:19: "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands [has] nourishment ministered . . ."

The true Church of God is the body of Christ. Just as the Spirit of God once dwelled in the earthly body of Jesus Christ, so now the Holy Spirit dwells in each member of the Church and together we constitute one body, doing the very work Christ did. We are therefore Christ's body today! And Christ is the Head as the Husband is the head of the wife (Ephesians 5:23).

No man is to sit in judgment of our Christian conduct, Paul is declaring in Colossians 2:16-17. Man does not determine how we should live. But it is the responsibility of the Church—the body of Christ—to determine these matters! The Church is to teach how to observe the festivals—to explain the meaning of self-control, etc. So these little-understood verses ought to be translated clearly: "Let no man therefore judge you . . . but (rather) let the body of Christ (determine it)." Greek scholars recognize that the first expression "let no man" demands that there be a subsequent expression which tells who is to do the judging of the matter!

How plain these verses are. How clear that the Colossians were keeping holy the time God made holy!

Since the true meaning of the expression "handwriting of ordinances"

according to the Bible is "acknowledgment of guilt through (following human) dogmas"—what about the "law of commandments in ordinances" mentioned in Ephesians 2:15?

#### Another Common Assumption

Here again people take for granted the Law of God or the "ceremonial" law of Moses! But it is neither! Notice hurriedly verses 11-12 of chapter 2: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh"—not Jews, notice, but Gentiles—"who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise"—having no knowledge of God's covenants and His laws—"having no hope, and without God in the world."

But Christ came to bring those far off near to God. How? Through the blood of Christ (verse 13). Christ reconciled us to God—reconciled the Gentile who was far off and the Jew who was near. This is explained in verse 16: "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." So we now have access to God by the Holy Spirit and whether Jew or Gentile are part of the one body—the body of Christ!

How did God reconcile us to Himself? Through the sacrifice of Christ! Christ paid for our sins! He condemned sin in the flesh. He conquered the carnal mind. "The carnal mind is *enmity* against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). It was because of the enmity—the ill-will, the hatred—of the natural mind in every human being that Christ had to die. What stood between all humanity and God was the natural enmity in every human mind. That is what separated us from God. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

It is not the law of God that has separated us from God. It is the violation of that law—sin—that separated us. That is the meaning of Ephesians 2:14—"and hath broken down the middle wall of partition." Notice that the words "between us" have been added and are in italics. Granted that there was a physical wall in the temple which separated the Jews who were "near" to God from the Gentiles who were "far off," but merely reconciling Jew with Gentile would not reconcile us with God. It is

our relationship to God that counts! The only wall referred to in Scripture is the wall that separates man from God. Notice Ezekiel 43:8. Because of idolatry—sin, God says "there was a wall between Me and them" (margin). That wall of sin—the natural *enmity* in the human heart and in society is broken down. Christ paid for it by sacrificing His own life for ours—"having abolished in his flesh the ENMITY"—having paid for sin and making possible the receipt of the Holy Spirit to conquer the carnality of man, the carnal opposition of society with its ways.

Jesus said, "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Through the power of the Spirit in our lives, we, too, can overcome the world, its customs, its false teachings, its heathen dogmas masquerading in the name of Christ, the dictates of society! That is what Christ abolished—"Having abolished in his flesh the ENMITY, even the law of commandments in ordinances". Notice it!

The enmity against God is expressed by commands in the form of "ordinances"—*dogmas*, in the Greek—the very commandments of men, human tradition, heathen customs, the dictates of society, which Paul condemned in Colossians. That is what Christ abolished through His sacrifice. The Gentile Ephesians did not know the law of God—they never practiced the law of Moses. It was their frightful sins which separated them from God.

Now they were reconciled to God, forgiven of their past sin. They had the Spirit of God to overcome themselves and to overcome the world around them, with its human traditions, its human dogmas, its human commandments which were in opposition to God and to His law! There is certainly not one word here about the law of Moses or the Ten Commandments being annulled.

Yes, it does make a difference to God whether we obey Him. It does make a difference which days we keep!

But what about Galatians 4:10 and Romans 14:5-6. What are the days referred to here?

#### Esteeming One Day Above Another

Let's notice what the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 14: 5, 6.

"One *man* esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind" (Romans 14:5, 6).

By taking these verses out of their setting, people make Paul say something altogether different from what he intended. Does Paul say to observe Christmas, Easter, Lent, Good Friday, Sunday, or the Festival of the Assump-

tion of Mary into Heaven?

Does he say here that Jesus by His death did away with the very days He kept during His whole life?

Does Paul say "*God* esteemeth one day above another" and "*God* esteemeth every day alike?" NO! The Scripture says "one *MAN* esteemeth one day above another." This tells us what certain *MEN* thought, not what God says!

We are not to be *judged* by what *men* think, but by the word of God! John 12:48 reads: "The *word* that I have spoken, *the same* shall judge him in the last day." Jesus is not going to judge you by what any *man* believes, but by the words *He* spoke!

Next, notice that these saints at Rome, having differing opinions, were forbidden to *judge one another* as unworthy of Christ. "Who are you that judges another man's servant? to his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be helped up: for *God is able to make him stand*" (Rom. 14:4).

Paul is *not* sanctioning nor condemning any particular periods of time, but warning the saints not to *judge* one another and cause strife for having differing opinions about things *they did not yet understand clearly*.

The Lord is the Judge of their deeds. "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it *unto the Lord*, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

Continuing, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Does this give license to believe whatever you want? God commands: "Lean not unto thine own understanding" (Prov. 3:5). How are you going to be fully assured in your own mind UNTIL YOU KNOW WHAT GOD SAYS IN HIS WORD? "The holy scriptures . . . are able to make you wise to salvation," wrote Paul (II Tim. 3:15).

By studying the Word of God to prove all things, and by holding fast that which is good (I Thess. 5: 21), YOU BECOME FULLY PERSUADED IN YOUR OWN MINDS concerning what *God* says.

#### Converts at Rome Were Weak

The saints at Rome were weak in the faith, not having acquired perfect knowledge. Paul says: "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, to the end that you *may be established*" (Rom. 1:11).

It is so plain. Here were new converts at Rome, without a regular local congregation, still weak in the faith, who were divided in their regard of certain customs. Paul told them not to sit in judgment of one another, but to follow peace, because *God* would judge them, after setting them aright through more

perfect knowledge which Paul was going to preach to them. In the meantime they were to act in accordance with the best they knew from *God's Word*, not *man's word*.

This did not give them liberty to do as they pleased. They were to obey what God revealed. It would be sin if they disobeyed *after the knowledge of the truth had come*. For to him that *knows* to do good and doesn't do it, it is sin (James 4:17; John 9:41).

### What Were These Days?

But what days was Paul referring to?

Let's read these verses in Romans 14 in their setting, rather than take them out of their context. Notice! Paul is writing to the saints at Rome, both Jew and Gentile. He admonished them to receive those who are weak in the faith (Rom. 14: 1), not to dispute with them over unimportant matters and sit in judgment on them. Some of these recently converted Gentiles, being weak in the faith, refused to eat meats, subsisting on vegetables mainly.

The reason for this is explained in I Corinthians 8. Most meat that could be bought had been offered to idols. Therefore some, with conscience of the idol "ate it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being *weak* is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse" (I Cor. 8: 7, 8).

There is the simple answer! Some Gentiles at Rome had been converted and *had given up idolatry*. But they still held superstitious beliefs in their minds, thinking that the idol was something *real*.

But why did Paul break into his dissertation—about eating meat or refraining from eating it—and mention "days?"

Notice the answer in the Moffatt translation of this passage:

"Then again, this man rates one day above another, while that man rates all days alike. Well, everyone must be convinced in his mind; the man who values a particular day does so to the Lord. The eater eats to the Lord, since he thanks God for his food; the non-eater abstains to the Lord, and he too thanks God" (Rom. 14:5, 6).

Did you catch what Paul wrote? Not only were there weak converts who were afraid of eating meat offered to idols, but there were others also who customarily **ABSTAINED FROM PARTICULAR FOODS—THEY SEMI-FASTED—ON CERTAIN PARTICULAR DAYS. STILL OTHERS REFUSED TO PRACTICE A SEMI-FAST OR ABSTAIN FROM FOODS BUT REGARDED EVERY DAY IN THE SAME WAY.**

The whole question surrounded the

matter of abstention on particular days. It is not a question of pagan holidays or God's Holy Days. It is merely a question of the days upon which many voluntarily abstained from certain foods.

Jesus said that our fasting should be done before God, and not to be seen or known of men unnecessarily (Matthew 6:16). But many Jews and Gentiles both practiced semi-fasts on particular days of each week or month. The Jews customarily fasted "twice in the week"—Monday and Thursday (Luke 18:12). They also fasted during certain months (Zech. 7:4-7). The Jews were divided on this matter. The Gentiles also had their divisions over when to abstain from certain foods. See Hastings's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

In God's sight it does not matter when one abstains or fasts—but it does matter that we do it with a right heart. Paul was going to Rome to straighten the brethren out on when and how to abstain, but for the moment he wanted them to live at peace with one another.

*So these days weren't God's days after all!*

There is nothing here referring to the Sabbath or the holy days of God which Paul commanded to be observed by the Gentiles.

But what about Paul's warning to the churches in Galatia against observing "days, months, times and years"? What were *these days* against which Paul preached? The answer will probably stun you!

### The Letter to the Galatians

Here is what Paul wrote to the Galatians:

"Howbeit then, *when you knew not God, you did service to them which by nature are no gods*. But now, *after you have known God, HOW TURN YOU BACK AGAIN* to the weak and beggarly elements [Gentile traditions] whereunto you desire *AGAIN* to be in bondage? *You observe days, and months, and times, and years*"—(Galatians 4:8-11). I am alarmed about you, he concludes!

What is this that Paul is saying?

Read it again!

Did he say, "Ye observe the Sabbath and annual holy days such as the Passover, Pentecost and Feast of Tabernacles"? No!

Paul said: "Days and months, and times, and years"—something altogether different!

### What Days Were These?

Notice this entire fourth chapter of Galatians. Paul begins the chapter by addressing the **JEW**s—not Gentiles, but Jews—who had been enslaved to worldly traditions—sinful practices in-

herited from the Gentiles since the days of Alexander the Great's conquest of Palestine.

These worldly traditions, which the apostle called "elements of the world" (Gal. 4:3), came to be known as Judaism. These were *not* God's laws, but the "traditions of the elders" (Mark 7:9)—worldly customs the Jews had adopted. Paul addresses these Jews as "we," because Paul was also a Jew. He says "we"—*the Jews*—were redeemed from "under the law"—that is, redeemed from death—the penalty of breaking God's spiritual law. The law had a claim over our lives because of our sins—because of following human, sinful practices (verse 5).

Beginning with verse 6, *Paul ceases to speak to the Jews*. Now he is speaking to the Gentile converts. He does not say "we," but "you." Notice it! "Howbeit, then, *when ye knew not God*"—remember, *the Jews knew God*, but the Gentiles had not known God before the preaching of the gospel! Jesus said to the Gentile Samaritan woman: "Ye"—the Gentiles—"worship ye know not what: *we*"—the Jews—"know what we worship for salvation is of the *Jews*" (John 4:22).

Continuing with Gal. 4:8: "When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God . . . how turn ye again unto the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire *again* to be in bondage?"

These converts to whom Paul is now writing were *not Jews!* They were Gentiles by birth. These *Gentile* converts in times past did not know God, were cut off from Him (see Eph. 2:12), "were slaves to gods which were no gods at all." They had been serving demons and idols, not the Living God. False teachers were coming among them, perverting the true gospel, beguiling them to *turn again to their former ways*. Paul was alarmed. They were departing from the gospel and **RETURNING** to *what?* "Days, and months, and times and years."

Pagan practices!—doing penance on Christmas, Easter, New Year's, Sunday!

They couldn't be returning to God's festivals. They never kept them before Paul preached about them.

### What Are "Times"?

Next, turn to Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10, 14. Here Moses, according to the command of God, orders the Israelites *not to observe "TIMES!"* This is **ABSOLUTE PROOF** that the days Paul is forbidding are pagan and *not* God-given. To observe *times* originally was a *heathen* practice often attached to the heavenly bodies, especially  
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## Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?

(Continued from page 8)

ly in determining the pagan calendar and the heathen religious seasons.

Some today try to make you believe Paul was condemning Jews for returning to the Sabbath and holy days of God, which they claim were in the Law of Moses. But the Law of Moses forbade observance of "times." Paul was writing to *Gentiles* who wanted to return to observing penance on the Gentile "days" associated with "times"—pagan "times" or "seasons"—such as the Easter and Christmas seasons!

The Catholic Bishop Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, admits that these superstitious *times* which Paul forbids, were *pagan customs* practiced by "Christians" in his day, as in the days of old. He says: "Many were superstitiously addicted to divination . . . upon them . . . In the celebration of these *times* [they] set up lamps in the marketplace, and *crown their doors with garlands*"—as is done at Christmas *time* today! (From *Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church*, pp. 1123, 1124).

Besides *times*, the Greeks observed special *days* in honor of the dead. "The rites took place on the . . . unlucky *days* accompanied by complete idleness and cessation of business" (From *Rest Days*, p. 79). Today several churches celebrate pagan days in honor of the dead, such as All Souls' Day and All Saints' Day [*called* Hallowe'en by the world]. These are the heathen days Paul forbids Christians to observe!

These Gentile Galatians were returning to the custom of doing penance on the old pagan days—days which now masquerade under Christian sounding names!

"Many of the holy days in the religious calendar of Christendom were *borrowed*, as is well known, from the *festivals of ancient paganism*" (*Rest Days*, p. 306).

Paul denounces this vain and abominable practice. We are NOT TO LEARN

the way of the heathen (Jer. 10).

In connection with the old pagan idolatry, *were numerous days observed as idolatrous penitential festivals.* These days were consecrated to deities of the state religious cults and were "unlucky" because of the supposed influence of the gods!

These religious holidays were set aside as periods of penance because they were "regarded as unsuitable for many purposes, both public and private: for battles, levies, sacred rites, journeys and marriages. We are told that they owed their unlucky quality to the pronouncement of the Senate and pontiffs." (From *Rest Days* by Webster, p. 171.)

As many as *one third of the days* of the old Greek and Roman calendars were marked as "unlawful for judicial and political business . . . and . . . on which the state expected the citizens to abstain, as far as possible, from their private business and labour!"

No wonder Paul spoke of "days!"

And how many "worldly" as well as religious people still have similar beliefs today! Such as "unlucky" *Friday the thirteenth!*

Paul was writing to the Galatians to enlighten their minds so they would *give up* this foolish regard of heathen days.

#### Other Heathen Holidays

Notice that Paul also condemns the pagan custom of observing "months and years"—another pagan custom!

Certain *months* of the year were considered sacred to the Greek gods, Apollo (April, October), Zeus (February, June), Artemas (April), Bacchus (January) and many others which you can read of in the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, article "Festival." God never commanded His people to commemorate months.

But the world today has adopted the heathen months of the Roman calendar—and forgotten God's calendar!

Also certain *years* were set aside quadrennially and biennially during which were national idolatrous feasts and the celebration of the Olympic, Ithmaian, Nemean and Pythian games. Every one of these was connected with idolatrous worship and ceremony.

Paul was forbidding Gentile converts to return to these heathen practices.

So, many of the present holidays of Christendom were celebrated in the heathen world *when Paul and Christ were on earth*, but they refused to observe them and commanded the true Church *not* to observe them!

#### It Was Prophesied to Happen!

"Why," it is often asked, "did the Bible not warn us that pagan holidays

would be substituted for the holy days?"

The answer is that **THE BIBLE DOES WARN US!** It was prophesied in advance—over 800 years before Paul warned about it in Galatians 4:10.

Turn to the book of Hosea. The prophet had a message for the future—for our day! Notice: "And I"—God is quoted by the prophet—"will punish her"—our people today—"for the **FEAST DAYS OF THE BAALS!**"

Sunday, Christmas, Easter, Halloween are feast days of Baal!

What could be plainer! Our people "forgot Me, says the Lord"—because they have rejected His holy days. "And in that day"—the very near future when Christ intervenes in world affairs—"I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more" (Hosea 2:13, 17, RSV).

How clear! Israel today—our people—have adopted the feast days of Baal. The greatest of church holidays—Easter—is named after the wife of Baal or Nimrod. God forbids us to honor Him by celebrating these Babylonish feasts. God warns: "Take heed . . . that thou inquire not . . . 'How used these nations to serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.' **THOU SHALT NOT DO SO UNTO THE LORD THY GOD.** For every abomination which He hateth, have they done unto their gods" (Deut. 12:30-31).

These pagan abominations are forbidden by the apostle Paul in Galatians. *That* is New Testament teaching!

#### Misunderstood Texts in the Old Testament

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 Israel did not remain faithful to these God-given festivals! They invented days of their own!

Several chapters are devoted by the prophet Ezekiel to a *condemnation of Israel for breaking the Sabbaths God had given.* Take special note of Ezekiel 20:12-26 and 22:26. The punishment inflicted upon the House of Israel was for desecrating the Sabbaths.

What was the extreme evil of Sabbath-breaking? With the desecration of the Sabbaths, idolatry was a natural consequence, and Sunday, Christmas and Easter were introduced. *These* pagan holidays God calls "abominations!"

Some claim there are texts in the Old Testament in which God says "My" Sabbaths and festivals "I hate." This is not

true. God said: "I hate, I despise *your* feast 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 . . .*" (I Kings 12:32, 33). This feast is the origin of Hallowe'en!

Thereafter *Israel altered the new moons and changed the Sacred Calendar.* They exchanged the Sabbaths for idolatrous days for sun-worship—the rest day was transferred from Saturday to Sunday. 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 (II 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!

Now let us continue with the history of the Jews.

#### Did Judah Remain Faithful?

Consider now what God says about "Jewish" feasts!

Now notice the first chapter of Isaiah. It is addressed in particular to Judah. Like the ancient people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Jews instituted their own appointed feasts and tampered with the period of the new moon. "*Your* new moons and *your* appointed feasts my soul hateth," said the Word of the Lord (Isaiah 1:14). This was the beginning of what are 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*.

Although the Jews added their own appointed feasts and new moons, they *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. "I cannot endure iniquity," says God, 'along with the solemn assembly.'" No wonder *God abhorred* THE MANNER in which the Jews treated His holy Sabbath and festivals (Isa. 1:13).

For that sin, especially, they were driven out of Judea and *deprived of one of the major blessings of God*—the joy 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!*

Notice that at the return of Christ—when He brings "good tidings" and "announceth peace"—He also commands His feasts to *be kept once again* (Nahum 1:15 and Zechariah 14:16-19 and Isaiah 56).

It is time we begin to follow Jesus' example and keep holy the days God made holy, instead of neglecting them!

Let's all be at the Feast of Tabernacles!