



July 09, 2021

Scriptural Basis for Celebrating the Feasts

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from my mobile office here in Tennessee. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed. We're still traveling and now back in Murfreesboro where we will remain for this Sabbath and webcast Services from here. It was a 13 hour day of traveling on Wednesday, so we're a bit tired. We plan to drive back to Spanish Fort on Sunday.

As I had written about previously, the Omaha, Nebraska congregation (where I grew up) celebrated the 50th anniversary of the church of God meeting in those locations back in 2013.

In discussion with brethren while there, some of us referred to our "legacy of celebrating the Holy Days and Feasts of the Lord as well as the weekly seventh day Sabbath which is the first of those Feasts listed". We were reminded that some ministers we knew played a significant role in bringing the observance of these festivals to the attention of the church. In one man's intense Biblical studies ca. 1927 he discovered that both the seventh-day Sabbath as well as God's annual Holy Days were to be kept by Christians. The conflict those studies presented increased with the then Church headquarters in Salem because of teachings about the identity of Israel and the annual Sabbath days. In 1938 a minister was asked to turn in his credentials for continuing to preach contrary to "Church doctrine". The minister discussed was not the first or the only one to teach the relevance of the Biblical festivals. A church of God preacher by the name of G.G. Rupert wrote about supporting the observance of the Biblical festivals. The following is from *History of the Seventh Day Church of God* by Richard C. Nickels:

"In May, June, and July of 1913, issues of the Bible Advocate carried articles supporting the observance of feast days. They were written by G.G. Rupert, later the publisher of the paper, The Remnant of Israel (1915-?), a former Seventh - Day Adventist. Rupert's starting premise was that "there is not a single text in the New Testament that teaches that any law that God ever gave was abolished and nailed to the cross . . ." and that only the sacrifices and oblations have ceased, as stated in Daniel 9:27. Rupert was an independent who for a time went along with the Church of God from Stanberry, but because they refused to accept his teachings, formed an independent movement."

Nickels records what Church of God leader Andrew Dugger wrote concerning the official church of God position. "In the "Question Corner" section, Dugger explained Romans 14:15 as follows: "The death of Christ made an end to the feast days, and meats and drinks, which were

shadows. Those who rejected Christ were still keeping these feast day Sabbaths . . . " and Paul gave them contrary instruction, Colossians 2:16"

Richard Nickels also mentions another man who promoted keeping the holy days. "In 1916, G.W. Sarber from Knox, Indiana wrote in the Advocate supporting the annual holydays. He mentioned that Pentecost is 50 days from Nisan 16, the Feast of Tabernacles is the 15th day of the seventh month, and the eighth day of Tabernacles is also a Sabbath rest. "These are the feasts of the Lord, and from the Bible standpoint they are as binding upon the sons of God at this present time as they were when God commanded them to Israel of old." Of course Sarber incorrectly determined the date for Pentecost, but clearly advocated celebrating the feasts.

So my friends and brethren, what is our Scriptural basis for celebrating the feasts mentioned in Leviticus 23? I've been asked this question many times over the years, and even of recent. It's good to review the Biblical explanations.

First, Jesus set an example for us, not only in handling suffering and persecution, but also in practicing righteousness and rejecting sin. (Matthew 3:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22; Hebrews 4:15) Jesus celebrated the Biblical festivals as a youngster. (Luke 2:41-43) The Gospel of John records Jesus going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. (John 7:2-14) Jesus observed the Passover and directed His disciples to observe it. (Luke 22:1-15)

The early church and the leaders of the church celebrated the Biblical festivals. The disciples were all together in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1) Jesus had "*commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father.*" (Acts 1:4) Jesus knew they would be in Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Weeks (or Pentecost) and knew when the Father would send the Holy Spirit. The historian Luke records the occurrences of the feast days which makes sense if he and the disciples were observing them. (Unleavened Bread, Acts 12:3-4 & Acts 20:6; Atonement, Acts 27:9)

The early church was viewed as a "sect of the Jews". Ananias the high priest and elders brought an orator Tertullus to Caesarea to accuse Paul. He referred to Paul as the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. Paul acknowledged that "*the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*" Paul worshipped according to what was written in the Pentateuch and Prophets. The Pharisees were also labeled a sect. (Acts 15:5)

When Paul arrived in Rome, he sent for the leaders of the Jews to plead his case. Paul stated "*I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers.*" (Acts 28:17) The Jews responded "*But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know*

that it is spoken against everywhere." (Acts 28:22) If Paul and the disciples had abandoned keeping the Sabbath and Biblical festivals and Commandments they would not be identified as a sect of the Jews. We'll further examine evidence supporting the church observing the Biblical festivals next time...

As I also mentioned, the Festival of Trumpets will be upon us in a few short weeks. I look forward to God's upcoming Feast Days, and I know you do too!

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

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