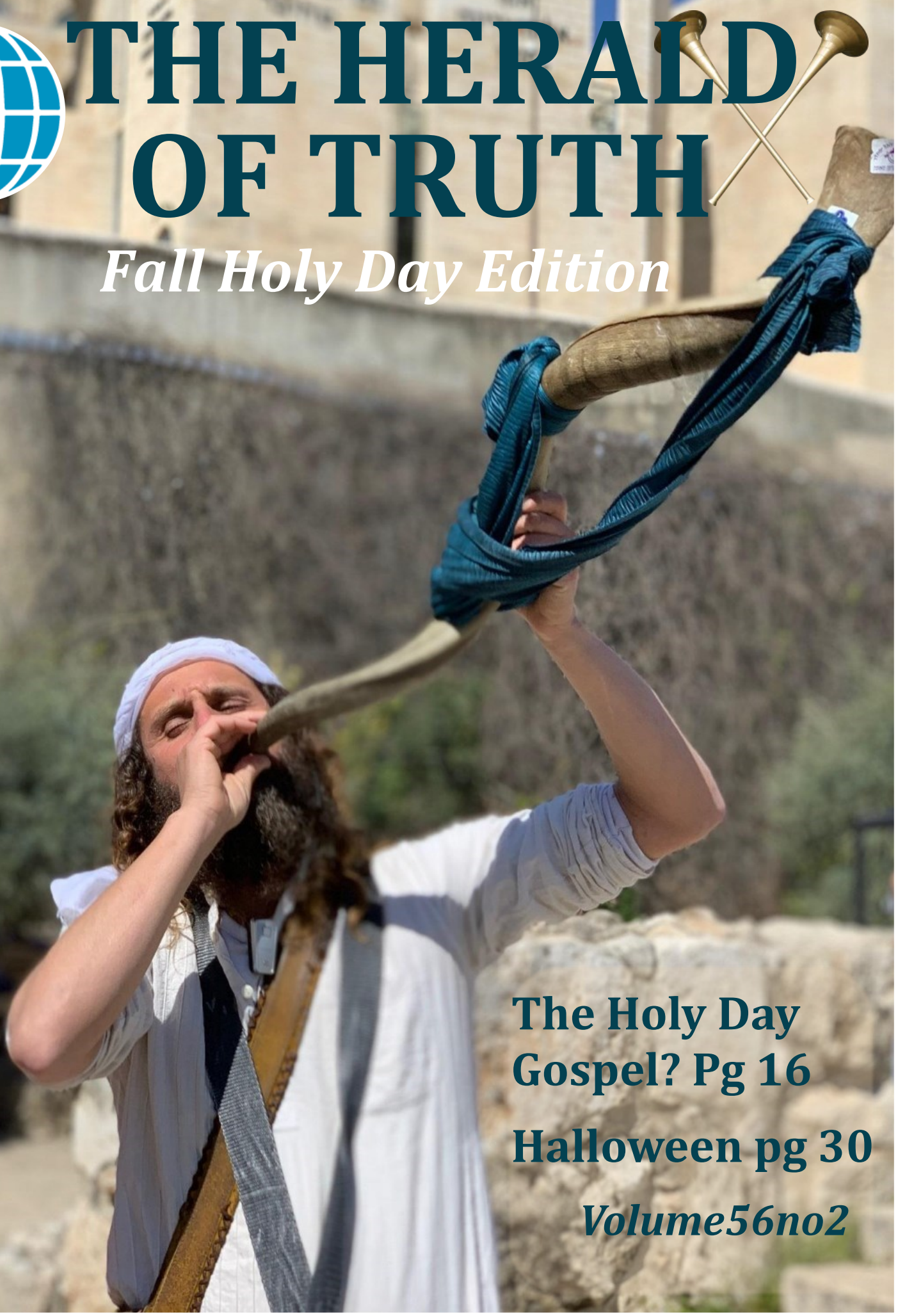




# THE HERALD OF TRUTH

*Fall Holy Day Edition*



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# Republicans Hold the House, Senate, and Presidency and Can Appoint More Conservative SCOTUS Judges.

Pastor/Editor: Byron Lee Sanchez  
(ESV)



I am optimistic that this is a net positive for the country at nearly every level and could potentially create an era of prosperity and conservative morality... but only if we have good leaders with good intentions. One of the keys to a Democratic Republic are checks and balances controlled by Law.

One party having monolithic control will certainly make a dramatic change and hopefully dramatic improvements possible... but when has human government ever been good? Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Our little State of Idaho is an example of both the good and evil that comes from a government where only one ideology is in control. So was NAZI Germany which was fantastic in the 30's... and then... well we all know how that ended. We must place our faith in the King of kings and not worship at the idol of man's government by

## **Keeping Our Hearts and Minds Focused on What Is Eternally Relevant**

We should pay attention to the direction of our nation but also watch our hearts in these crazy, divisive, and rapidly changing times. Many of us feel a sense of optimism about the current political landscape. I know that I do. It seems like opportunities for positive change, moral improvement, and societal stability lie within reach. However, while it is right to hope and to work toward good governance, we must be cautious not to misplace our trust in the systems of men or the fleeting promises of worldly power. Instead, we must keep our hearts and minds fixed on what is eternally relevant: the Kingdom of God.

## **Human Governments Are Not the Solution**

The prophet Jeremiah warns us in Jeremiah 17:5, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man

and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord." No matter how promising a political leader or party may appear, the truth remains that human governments are made of flawed, sinful people who are as susceptible to corruption as anyone else. History bears witness to this reality. Power can bring about great good, but as Lord Acton famously said, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Without checks, balances, and godly principles, even the best leaders fail.

As Christians, we must engage with the world around us, vote according to our convictions, and advocate for justice and righteousness in our communities. But we need to remember that no government can save us. No political system can redeem the world from sin. Only Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), can bring about true and lasting peace. We must not worship at the idol of man's government. Even the best leaders will fail without the sustaining power of God.

## **The Danger of Misplaced Faith**

When we place too much trust in human systems or leaders, we risk turning our hearts away from God. Proverbs 29:2 reminds us, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan." Righteous leaders can bring a measure of justice, prosperity, and peace, but they cannot transform the human heart. They cannot bring salvation. Only Christ can do that.

It is easy to become consumed by political victories and defeats, treating them as though they hold eternal significance. But we must remember the words of Jesus in John 18:36: "My kingdom is not of this world."



The affairs of earthly governments, while important, are temporary. They are fleeting shadows compared to the eternal reign of Christ. If we anchor our hope to the shifting sands of politics, we will find ourselves unstable and disappointed. But if we anchor our hope in Christ, we will stand firm, no matter how the winds of this world may blow.

### **An Encouragement to Pray and Act with Discernment**

Scripture calls us to pray for our leaders and those in authority. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:1–2, “I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” Whether or not we agree with our leaders, we have a responsibility to lift them up in prayer, asking God to guide their decisions and to work through them for His purposes.

Prayer is not where our responsibility ends. Proverbs 21:31 reminds us, “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.” This means that we must do our part—preparing, working, and acting in ways that align with God’s will—while recognizing that the ultimate outcome rests in His hands. We must not be passive observers, but active participants in seeking justice, defending the oppressed, and proclaiming the gospel in word and deed.

### **The Eternal Perspective: The Kingdom of God**

While we navigate our responsibilities as citizens of an earthly nation, we must never lose sight of our citizenship in heaven. Paul reminds us in Philippians 3:20, “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Our primary allegiance is not to any political party, government, or nation but to the Kingdom of God.

The prophet Isaiah speaks of this Kingdom in Isaiah 9:7: “Of the increase of His

government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.” This is the government we long for—a Kingdom of perfect justice, peace, and righteousness, ruled by our Savior and King.

As we look forward to the return of Christ and the establishment of His eternal Kingdom, let us live in a way that reflects His values. Let us be peacemakers, truth-tellers, and ambassadors of grace in a world desperate for hope. Let us labor not for the praise of men but for the glory of God, knowing that our efforts for His Kingdom will never be in vain.

### **An Appeal to Keep Our Eyes on Jesus**

Brothers and sisters, it is tempting to fixate on the immediate battles and concerns of this life. It is tempting to believe that if we could only elect the right leaders, enact the right policies, or overturn the wrong laws, all would be well. But the truth is that even the best human efforts are insufficient without the redeeming power of Christ.

As we engage in the world, let us not lose sight of what is eternally relevant. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, “the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). Let us store up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves cannot break in and steal (Matthew 6:20). Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, trusting that all other things will be added to us in His perfect timing (Matthew 6:33).

I ask you; Where is your hope anchored? Is it in the temporary promises of man, or in the eternal promises of God? Are you more passionate about the affairs of this world than about the mission of Christ? We need to examine our hearts, repent where needed, and recommit ourselves to the things that matter most.

### **A Call to Faithfulness**

The days ahead may bring prosperity or adversity, unity or division, victory or defeat. Whatever comes, we need to remain faithful to

our calling as followers of Christ. We should pray for our leaders, engage with our communities, and work for good, but never forget that our ultimate hope is not in the systems of man but in the unshakable Kingdom of God.

Isa 33:22 For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us.

May we shine as lights in the darkness, pointing others to the only One who can truly save. May we be faithful stewards of the time, resources, and opportunities God has given us. And may we keep our hearts and minds focused on what is eternally relevant, trusting that in Christ, we have a hope that will never fail.

## **RADIATE HOPE**

Elections stir up fear, anxiety, and anger. We have an opportunity to radiate hope in Christ the King, who is unshaken by even the biggest world news. Shine Christ's light into the tense and angry corners of your community this week.

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Mat 5:15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Mat 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

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## **THE CHURCH AND THE HOLY DAYS**

**By Larry Dean Spurgeon  
(NIV)**

This article was reprinted from the "Herald of Truth," Vol. 27, No. 3, 1981.)

What is the role of the annual Holy Days of Leviticus 23 in the Church Age? Is there a clear New Testament injunction, command, or example, either for or against them? And what should be the Christian attitude towards these days?

Rather than merely presenting a case either for or against observing the Holy Days, let us openly review both cases and then see what conclusions can be drawn.

The case for Christian observance of the Holy Days is relatively simple and concise. First of all, God commanded the observance of these days and called them His (Lev. 23:1,2). Being the special days of a holy and righteous God, the days are then themselves holy. They were commanded to be observed forever (Lev. 23:14,21,31,41).

The Holy Days depict the plan of God for salvation for mankind. Passover depicts a blood sacrifice for imputed righteousness and protection from death (physical and/or spiritual). The Days of Unleavened Bread picture coming out of sin (Egypt). Pentecost represents the first fruits of God's harvest of the world. The Feast of Trumpets shows Christ's return (I Thess. 4:16). Atonement pictures the binding of Satan. The Feast of Tabernacles shows us the



Millenium, and the Last Great Day points us to the ages beyond.

The transferral of these days from Israel to the Church is usually based on Galatians 3:29, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The basic argument against Christian observance of the Holy Days is that they could only be kept in Jerusalem. The second one is that there is no evidence of the early church keeping these days. The third point is that these are part of that “added Law” which was added “because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come” (Gal. 3:19). Let us examine each of these points carefully to see if these things be so.

In Exodus 19, the account of God’s covenant with national Israel begins. God promises that “if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:5-6). The details of God’s Law, His covenant with Israel, follow in chapters 20-23. In chapter 24, the people accept the covenant.

In that covenant, most of the Holy Days are specifically commanded – the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Ex. 23:14-17). Following the people’s confirmation of the covenant, God gives additional information to Moses concerning the proper mode of worship, but not one word of the covenant limits worship to just one locality.

When a centralized place for worship was established in Israel, it was **not** at Jerusalem, but at Shiloh (Judges 21:19; I Sam. 1:24), north of Bethel. Jerusalem, through the period of the Judges, was a Gentile city, known as Jebus, the home of the Jebusites (Judges 19:10-12). Only when David (not God) chose to build a temple in Jerusalem did religious activity center there.

But not all of Israel’s worship to God was conducted from Shiloh. We find this account in I Samuel 9, beginning in verse 7: “Saul said to his servant, ‘If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?’ The servant answered him again, ‘Look,’ he said, ‘I have a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take.’” (Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer,’ because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.) “‘Good,’ Saul said to his servant. ‘Come, let’s go.’ So they set out for the town where the man of God was. As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and they asked them, ‘Is the seer here?’ ‘He is,’ they answered. ‘He is ahead of you.

Hurry now, he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time.’ They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.”

From these eight verses, it is apparent that God’s prophets of that day traveled from place to place to offer sacrifices and worship at various high places throughout the nation of Israel. Worship was not limited to Shiloh.

So we find that there is no evidence of **all** of the people gathering at only **one** site. And indeed, we find that even when large numbers did gather at Shiloh, it was only at one of the feasts, but which one is not made clear. Judges 21:19 speaks of “**the** annual festival (singular) of the Lord in Shiloh;” and again, Elkanah went to Shiloh to offer **the** annual sacrifice of the Lord. The people of Israel thus observed the other Holy Days in their local communities.

The commandments of Moses to Israel specify that the Holy Days were to be kept in **many locations**. After giving some specifications about the nature of keeping the Holy Days with the animal sacrifices, Moses told the people, “When the Lord your God has enlarged your territory as He promised you ... (and) if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His Name is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the Lord has given you, and **in your own towns** you may eat as much of them as you want” (Deut. 12:20-21).

Numbers, chapters 28 and 29, give us a still broader view of the various holy times and offerings imposed on Israel. The first eight verses of Numbers 28 detail the animal and drink offerings to be presented **by all Israelites** (vs. 2) “at the sanctuary” (vs. 7). Was all of Israel from Dan to Beersheba to travel **daily** to Jerusalem (or Shiloh) to present both morning and evening sacrifices, as some would have us believe? Were **all** Israelites to also travel for the weekly Sabbath, or for the New Moon offerings?

No, it is obvious from both the physical impossibility as well as the Biblical record that day-to-day life went on throughout the nation. Some traveled periodically for special daily sin offerings,

some traveled further than others, some sacrificed where they were, at local high places, and many (in the righteous years of the nation) traveled to a central site for at least one annual Holy season Festival.

Still, another illustration that the ancient Israelites understood that the Holy Days could be kept anywhere comes from the Apocryphal book of II Edras. There it is recorded, “And as for your seeing him gather about himself another multitude that was peaceable, these are the ten tribes that in the days of King Hosea were carried away from their own land into captivity, whom Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, made captives, and carried beyond the river; they were carried off to another country. But they formed this plan among themselves, to leave the heathen population, and go to a more distant region, where the human race had never lived **so that there perhaps they might keep their statutes**, which they had not kept in their own country” (II Edras 13:39-43, Goodspeed Translation).

Jesus verified that **location** had **no bearing on true worship**, saying, “A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem ... The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:21,22).

What did God intend for Israel originally? He **did** intend annual festivals (Lev. 23), even before Israel sinned (Ex. 32). And while certain activities could only take place at the Tabernacle, such as the High Priest (not the entire nation) entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, this did **not** require the presence of **all** citizens at **one** time, or at **one site**.

The tribe of Levi had been denied a land inheritance in Israel for a God-ordained purpose. Rather than requiring all Israel to travel to **one** site, the Levitical priesthood was scattered throughout Israel for the purpose of **local** worship.

So we have already seen that the Holy Days were not an “added Law” of punishment, having preceded Israel’s sin, nor were they tied to **geography** in Israel.

Some might ask, were the Holy Days observed throughout the 40 years in the wilderness? The evidence is not conclusive. One Passover in the wilderness is recorded, that being in the second year after the Israelites left Egypt (Num. 9:1-14). It is at this point that the instructions for the second

Passover, for those who might be prevented by circumstances from keeping the Passover at the proper time, are given.

The last verse of this section about the Passover points out that the same regulations for its observance must be enforced for both the alien and the native-born. Thus we see that, even then, these days were **not** just for the Israelites, but for all people of all nations who would live to please God, be they European, Chinese, or American Indian. All of these other peoples were to learn from God’s chosen people and please God in precisely the **same way**, including celebrating coming out of Egypt.

What were the requirements for Passover observance in ancient Israel? There were requirements about the food to be eaten, the manner of eating, what to do with the leftovers, and the time of celebration. And there was one other requirement: circumcision. “An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the

Lord’s Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you” (Ex. 12:48-49).

But not even the Israelites remained circumcised throughout their stay in the wilderness. Joshua had to circumcise the men who were to cross the Jordan, because “all the people born in the desert during the journey from Egypt had not (been circumcised)” (Joshua 5:4).

Had the uncircumcised Israelites kept the Passover, contrary to the requirements? Would non-observance under those circumstances have been more appropriate? Were the days kept spiritually but not physically? Over and over, the Biblical record simply does not say, one way or the other, and no case should be made from that silence.

But whether the Holy Days were or were not kept in the wilderness is really a moot question, because God did not intend a wilderness entrance into the Promised Land to immediately follow the receiving of the Law (Num. 14).

While all of this may show a lack of knowledge or understanding on the part of some about the national, Old Covenant relationship of the Holy Days to God’s people, this alone does not substantiate

“A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem ... The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:21,22).

either the observance or the non-observance of the Holy Days in the Church Age.

What are the New Testament pros and cons of the Holy Days observance? The answers are to be found in the letters of Paul, especially in Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Romans, and in the book of Acts. Precisely what is Paul's teaching to these basically Gentile churches concerning days, seasons, times, and years?

Perhaps surprisingly, the given instructions vary from church to church, because Paul writes about different days to different churches!

What were the problems in the Galatian churches, and what does Paul say to the Christians there? Precisely what is the context of the Galatian letter?

The first chapter of Galatians opens with a customary greeting from Paul to the brethren, and then states the reason for writing, beginning in verse 6. "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"

This does not spell out the details of the false teaching that was spreading through Galatia, but only that there was some false teaching.

Verse 10 sees a change in direction. "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." The rest of chapter one through two is a justification of Paul's role in the Church.

Chapter three brings us back to the problem that prompted Paul's letter. "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes, Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" This clearly tells us that the Galatians

were trusting in their own works for salvation, and not solely in Jesus Christ.

But what were these human efforts of the Galatians? Paul goes through several more examples before he gets to the heart of the matter, beginning in verse 8 of chapter 4. "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God – or rather are known by God – how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and

years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."

What were these special days, months, seasons, and years that the Galatians were observing, and why were they observing them? There are two different views as to

"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"

~Galatians 1:6-8

what these days were. Some believe that these were the annual Holy Days. This they seem to see as being quite clear, because Paul had written critically of "those who belonged to the circumcision group" (Gal. 2:12), his distinction between law and faith (Gal. 3:2,3), and the extensive use of Old Testament examples throughout the letter.

Others see these as pagan holidays. This is believed because of references to "weak and miserable principles," called "the elementary principles of the world" in some translations. These are understood to be a worship of the Greek four basic elements of earth, water, fire, and air, along with astrological worship. Paul does use the phrase "turning back" and "enslaved by them all over again," and it is reasoned that no Gentile could turn back to the Old Testament annual Holy Days who had never previously kept them.

Which is true?

The gramatic and logistic integrity of Galatians 4:8-11 requires that the Galatians were bringing elements of paganism into their practice of Christianity. But that does not of itself abolish the negative impression about keeping the law that parts of Galatians seems to have. We'll examine these later in this article, but first let's look at the other references Paul made to special occasions.



Colossians 2:16-17 states, “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day.” This text clearly refers to the Holy Days, the Sabbath, and New Moon celebrations. What does this verse mean?

Does it mean, as some have suggested, that Paul said **not** to observe these occasions? No! Instead, it says **not to let anyone judge you** on account of what you eat or drink, or your observance of these various festivals. Don’t let anyone judge you **because of** these things. It does **not** say not to let anyone judge you because you do not observe those days. But the absolute bottom line is **don’t judge one another**, regardless of whether one does or does not observe these days. That must be the decision of each individual, hopefully as led by the Holy Spirit.

The problem of judging one’s brethren arose in another context to the Roman Church. “Accept him whose faith is weak: **without passing judgment on disputable matters**. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” (Rom. 14:1-4).

Jesus also spoke about judging our brethren. “Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca’ (an Aramaic term of contempt) is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell! (Gehenna)” (Matt. 5:22).

This puts Colossians 2:16 into proper perspective. Some people were judging, criticizing, and condemning the Colossians Christians for observing religious festivals, New Moon celebrations, the Sabbath, and how they ate and drank. The Colossians were encouraged to withstand judgment for observing certain days, while the Galatians were criticized for their actions, adding to the evidence that the Galatians were keeping pagan days (the Colossian case is to be distinguished from that at Galatia by the preceding statement).

But what is the significance of Paul’s comments about the Law? Precisely what did Paul say to the Galatians?

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by

observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing – if it really was for nothing? Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?” (Gal. 3:1-5).

The important question is, why were the Galatians trying to keep the law? From the context of Paul’s questions, they were trying to keep the law: **A)** to receive the Holy Spirit; **B)** for the working of miracles; and **C)** to obtain their goal, that is, to inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul does not say, “Do not keep the law,” but he does say, “Do not keep it for the purpose of justification.” Notice! “Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Gal. 3:11). And again, “We who are Jews by birth ... Know that a man is **not** justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and **not** by observing the law, because by observing the law **no one** will be justified” (Gal. 2:15-16).

But does that mean that the early Jewish Christians did not observe the law? And especially, did Paul observe the law?

In Acts 21, Luke records a conversation between James and Paul at Jerusalem. “Then they (James and the elders with him) said to Paul: ‘You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs.’” (vss. 20-21).

But were these accusations true?

James continued, “What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know that **there is no truth** in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law” (Acts 21:22—24).

We are thus plainly told that Paul kept the law. James did not say that Paul kept the law only in Jerusalem, or only among the Jews, but that Paul’s lifestyle was that of keeping the law, and even the

customs of Moses, since the false reports included the customs apart from the law. Hence, when Paul urges the Galatians, “I plead with you, brothers, become like me,” (Gal. 4:12), he was telling them that there is a proper place for observing the law, and even the Jewish customs in that Gentile church!

But why? For what purpose is the observance of the law in the New Testament age? One thing is clear. It is **not** for justification. “We who are Jews by birth ... Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 2:15-16). So why keep the Holy Days?

“Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine, and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name, **so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always**. But if that place is too distant ... Then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice” (Deut. 14:23-26).

Here are two reasons to keep the Holy Days: to learn to revere the Lord always, and to rejoice before God. If that be the reason for observing the Holy Days, then why should anyone not want to keep the Holy Days?

The apostle Paul adds another aspect to the question. “What shall we say then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer?” (Rom. 6:1-2). And again, “What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!” (Rom. 6:15).

To sin is to miss the mark. In the war between the tribe of Benjamin and the rest of Israel, Benjamin mustered a corp of seven hundred men who slung stones lefthanded and not sin. Various translations render the word translated sin as ‘miss’, both there and in other places because the meanings are the same. To miss the mark is to sin, and to sin is to miss the mark.

What is the mark of God’s high calling? What is the expression of His will and of His perfect character? What is the perfection, or maturity, that we are supposed to grow into throughout our Christian lives? His will is made clear in His law, and if God’s grace has so overwhelmed us so that we will not live in sin, but will live pleasing to Him because of our

love for Him, then we will automatically do the opposite of sin, of missing His mark, and that means that we will keep the law, rather than go on sinning so that grace may increase, as the apostle Paul said.

Yes, we are under grace, and not even the Jews keep the law for justification, but that does not mean that one should not rejoice before God during the Holy Days. Indeed, that we are under grace means that we will **not** go on sinning, and therefore we will keep the Holy Days, along with the rest of God’s law. And why, one might ask, should rejoicing before God ever be wrong?

Yet, there surely are and will continue to be some in God’s Church who will feel that it is coming under a needless bondage to keep the Holy Days, and may even verge on denying faith in Christ in favor of works. Such is a problem of attitude, of keeping the Holy Days for entirely the wrong motives, not out of love of God, but to earn one’s own salvation, not unlike Simon Magus’ effort to buy the power of the Holy Spirit with money.

But while one can teach and understand that it is out of love, and not any attempt to earn salvation (which is a free gift of God), that one should keep the Holy Days, what should the attitude of the Holy Day observer be to the non-observer, and vice versa?

“One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards a day as special, **does so to the Lord** ... You then, why do you judge your brother? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat ... Therefore, let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way” (Rom. 14:5,6,10,13).

The key to our relationship with those who may view the Holy Days differently than ourselves is with Christian love. The admonition, “Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil” (Rom. 14:16) is applicable both ways.

Those of us who, among various organizations within God’s Church, choose to rejoice before God during the Holy Days do so for the sake of doing so. Other organizations in God’s Church might not choose to observe these days. But whether one observes or does not observe, let all be done for Jesus Christ, the soon-coming King of us all.

(Scripture quotes are from the NIV, except the one quote from the Apocrypha.

# WELCOME TO GOD'S HOLY CONVOCATIONS - MOEDIM

By Pastor Wes Higgins  
(NKJV)

If we are diligent in reading God's Word, sometimes we will find a statement that stops us cold, and sets us to thinking "How does this apply to me, or does it?" Such a statement is found in Leviticus 23:2. "The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts" (NKJV). If you mention these feasts to anyone, chances are they will come back with "Oh, you mean the Jewish feasts". Read verse two again. God says they are "My feasts" – they are not Jewish feasts – and has invited, no, commanded us to proclaim and observe them, "You shall proclaim". Paul writes to Timothy, reminding him that "All scripture (the only scripture available at the time Paul wrote that was what we call the Old Testament) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness", 2 Timothy 3:16-17, NKJV. But someone might bring out that Moses was speaking to the Children of Israel, for those die-hards Paul tells the Gentile Church in Rome that they were grafted into the tree of Israel. See Romans 11. Throughout the New Testament we see what God applied to Israel applied to Christians as well. You can find Christ and His disciples keeping the Sabbaths and Holy Convocations throughout the Gospel. In fact, the Holy Spirit was given on one of God's Holy Convocations – the day of Pentecost called the Day of First Fruits in the Old Testament. Compare Leviticus 23:10-12, Numbers 28:26, and Acts 2.

So let's take a look at the emphasis the Bible places on God's feasts. Let's start at the first few verses of Leviticus 23. The Bible names them "the feasts of the Lord" and God says they are His feasts, then He commands His people to proclaim them. Then in verse four, the scripture repeats their name and repeats God's instructions to proclaim them, adding they are to be proclaimed in their appointed seasons. God's Feasts are Holy Convocations – times of gathering together in and with the presence of the Lord.

The Hebrew word used in Leviticus 23:2 translated as "feasts" is mo'ed. This word means

"appointed times". God is saying His feasts are "My appointed times" – Holy Convocations – which you shall proclaim and observe. The word mo'ed first appears in Genesis 1:14, where God said "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons (mo'ed) and for days and years". We see here that God's appointed times or meetings were so important to God that He set the lights in the heavens as the means of calculating them from creation. But there is a hint in Isaiah that these appointed times existed even before creation as we know it. In Isaiah 14 we see that Lucifer, one of the anointed cherubs who covered God's throne (see Ezekiel 28:14), rebelled against God. Lucifer turned Satan said "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God (the angels); I will also sit on the mount of the congregation (mo'ed, the appointed times of God) – I will be like the Most High", Isaiah 14:13-14, NKJV. Satan wanted to take over God's appointed times and make them his. This rebellion of Satan and his demons took place before the world as we know it was created. We know this because shortly after God created Adam and Eve, Satan appeared to Eve as the serpent in rebellion against God. Another clue to the importance of God's festivals is found in the book of Revelations, where John records Jesus' words about Himself "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world", Revelation 13:8, NKJV. The very act of Salvation through Jesus Christ's death is told to them. Now do we begin to see how much importance God places on them?

The apostle Paul writes to the Gentile church at Corinth stating "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast", 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, NKJV. Paul is not only referring to the taking of the Passover symbols but the full feast of unleavened bread, lasting seven days, in which two Holy Convocations are included. Paul also wrote the largely Gentile church at Colosse, explaining the importance of God's festivals as prophetic, revealing the salvational acts of Jesus Christ. "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival

or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ”, Colossians 2:16-17, NKJV. What Paul is telling the Colossians is written for our admonition as well. Now that should make you sit up and notice. This implies that these things somehow reveal the salvational acts of Jesus Christ. God's festivals were so important to Paul that he would even cut his journeys short so he could be in Jerusalem on the Feast Day, see Acts 20:16 and 1 Corinthians 16:8. Luke, writing in the books of Acts, mentions the feast of Atonement, “The Fast was already over”, Acts 27:9, NKJV, so the reader would understand why “sailing was now dangerous” (the festival of Atonement falls in the Fall, usually our month of October). John, in writing the book of Revelation, says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. John was not talking about Sunday nor the Sabbath, but the prophetic Return, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

So let's take a good look at what God's appointed feasts reveal about the salvational acts of and through Jesus Christ. Leviticus 23:3, “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings”. On the sixth day of creation, God finished the physical creation, with mankind created in physical perfection, see Genesis 1:31. But mankind was to be made into the very image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). To complete His creation, God gave him the seventh day Sabbath, a holy time of communicating with God, and Jesus the Christ, Lord of the Sabbath, Mark 2:28.

Return to Leviticus 23, next comes the first yearly Holy Convocation to be proclaimed. Leviticus 23:5, “On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover”. Like all of God's festivals, you have to search God's word to get the full understanding and meaning of the Passover. Suffice it to say, that the Passover – Christ's willing sacrifice – is the beginning step of God's plan for mankind's salvation. Leviticus 23:6-8, “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord – On the first day you shall have a holy convocation – The seventh day shall be a holy convocation.” Jesus Christ died on Passover day, “the preparation Day”, Mark 15:42. Jesus Christ's death – Christ's blood covering our sins, allowing us access to

the Father (see John 14:6) – prepared the way for the keeping of the first holy convocation of the days of Unleavened Bread. The days of Unleavened Bread represent repentance and the putting out of our lives sin and replacing it with the unleavened bread of life, Jesus Christ. See 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 and John 6:32-40. Jesus Christ made the removal of Sin from our lives possible through His death.

Next comes the ceremony of the first fruits. This is one ceremony we are not asked to replicate. “You shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it”, Leviticus 23:10-11, NKJV. This represents Jesus Christ as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”, 1 Corinthians 15:20, NKJV, “the firstborn from the dead”, Colossians 1:18, NKJV. John shows us that the wave sheaf offering was fulfilled just after Christ's Resurrection. When Mary approached Jesus's tomb, He said to her “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God'.”, John 20:17, NKJV. We see that Christ then ascended to His Father and was accepted on our behalf when later the same day He appeared to the disciples and showed them His hands and His side. John 20:19-20.

As Paul writes, “each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming”, 1 Corinthians 15:23, NKJV. The wave sheaf offering plays an important part in the next two festivals. Leviticus 23:15, “And you shall count for yourselves – from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.” This festival is variously called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22) or the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16). It is unique in that it revolves around our “laborers which you have sown in the field”. Jesus talks about this harvest feast, recorded in John 4:35. “Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the (fall) harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest.” Christ then goes on to explain that there is labor involved in the harvest and that there will be wages paid that include Eternal



Life. The focus of the Feast of the Harvest is all about personal evangelism.

The second feast that ties back to the wave sheaf is the day of the first fruits. Leviticus 23:16, “Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.” Numbers 28:26, NET, “And on the day of first fruits when you bring a new grain offering to the Lord after your weeks have been counted, you shall have a holy convocation”. In the New Testament, the Day of First Fruits is called Pentecost (Acts 2). This is the day tradition tells us the Ten Commandments were given. It is the day in the New Testament when the power of the Holy Spirit is first manifested.

Christ's salvational acts are plainly revealed in the Spring and summer festivals. Now we will look at the Fall feasts. Leviticus 23:24, “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.” This day of rest and meeting together looks forward to the Return of Jesus Christ. The trumpet here is the ram's horn, or traditionally the trumpet of war, picturing Jesus Christ's Return to Earth along with His saints and army to take back this Earth from Satan and to rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Revelation 17-20. Leviticus 23:27-28, “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls (fast) – And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God.” Also, see Leviticus 16 – This day is considered the most solemn day of Rest – No work is allowed. It pictures the two goats, one sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins, the other representing the Azazel. This day also pictures being able to come face to face with God, as the High Priest was able to do on that day, and at the same time Satan being bound in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3), no longer able to terrorize the world for 1000 years.

Next comes the Feast of Tabernacles. Leviticus 23:34, “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord.” Verse 42, “You shall dwell in booths for seven days.” This feast pictures the reign of Jesus Christ on this Earth with His saints, ruling for 1000 years. Revelation 20:4-6. A time of peace, safety, and

prosperity such as the world has never known since before Adam and Eve bowed to Satan.

John 7:37, “On the last day (the seventh day), that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me – out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive”. The last, or seventh, day of the feast represents the Great White Throne Judgment – the second Resurrection in which millions of people will be resurrected to life – they will have the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit upon Repentance and baptism. See Revelation 20:11-15 and Acts 2:38.

There remains yet one more Holy Convocation. Leviticus 23:36, “For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day, you shall have a holy convocation – It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.” The Eighth Day is special, set aside from the Feast. They were allowed to return home on the seventh day, the Feast of Tabernacles being over they were no longer required to dwell in booths (see Leviticus 23:41-42), but yet were called back by God to come again “on the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation – It is a sacred assembly”. In John chapters seven and eight, we see this very thing happening. John 7:37-39, we see Jesus preaching “on the last day” of the feast, calling any who thirst to come to Him and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was giving everyone the opportunity to repent and be baptized, and upon doing so they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was prophetic “because Jesus was not yet glorified”, verse 39. See also Acts 2:38, where Peter made a similar offer after Jesus' glorification. Returning to John chapter 7:53, we see that everyone returned to their own homes because the seven-day feast was over. But in John 8:2, we see everyone returning. “Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.” This is the eighth day, which represents a time beyond. All the other Holy Convocations have been completed; on the eighth day, mankind can enter into the presence of God. It is the time John wrote about. “I saw a new heaven...”, see Revelation 21:1-7. Welcome to God's Holy Convocations.

# Finding My Place at Sukkot This year

By Russell Maples

Have you ever been somewhere you just felt like you didn't belong? For some of us, the question is more about when we've felt like we do belong. Being the anxious product of a broken home, later being disengaged through the education system, feeling frightened and disconnected as a teenager, and dealing with empty and purposeless adult years is a tragedy for a different time. For now, I want to share a personal and recent holiday story:

This year I was asked to come speak with/for a group at their Feast of Tabernacles gathering. I was honored and blessed by the invitation to unity from a fellowship that knows some of our doctrinal and practical differences. But there were a lot of reasons not to go:

1. I am an introvert. In spite of the fact that my career and ministry have been about people, I would be absolutely happy to never leave my home. If I were neither married to my wife nor called by God, I would almost certainly have found a remote job and order groceries to my doorstep, which I would never step on except to gather said groceries and various Amazon packages.
2. This particular gathering was in the mountains near the end of October. We generally celebrate Sukkot / The Feast of Tabernacles in the valley at a nice comfortable, not too cold, campground.
3. This was the first Sukkot we were scheduled to spend with our new congregation. Adding the complexity of leading a congregation to our holidays was already a challenging adjustment for my family (although a wonderful one); adding the difficulty of bringing our young group into fellowship with a group of strangers was another thing we didn't feel we had time for.
4. We weren't prepared for a week out of town. We had tentatively planned for half of our Tabernacles celebration to be on a friend's property just a few miles from home.
5. On top of not wanting to spend a whole week with people I did not know, I hadn't spoken to a

group of strangers for more than 10 minutes in a very long time. The introvert in me was a little bit terrified of the whole thing.

Really, there was no way I was going to refuse an offer like that, though. That kind of unity is near the heart of our ministry, so we gave an enthusiastic "yes" and prayed the details would work themselves out.

When we announced these plans to our church community, one person committed to go up there with us, and everyone else had problems with the distance, the schedule, or the cold weather up in the mountains – so I thought my family wasn't going to spend any time with our congregation for the feast, because I said "yes" to another congregation... ugh. Then we had problems securing accommodations, and after we got that worked out, there were more problems with accommodations (several times).

The first day of The Feast of Tabernacles came, and my kids were as excited as they always are for that holiday, but also very tired from all the preparing and packing around an impossibly busy schedule this year. They were all sleeping soundly when I went to hook up the trailer and check everything one last time before we left. Naturally, there were mechanical problems with the trailer and with the hitch, so I fought with that thing for some hours before waking the rest of the kids to leave; we were now going to be late for services where I was supposed to speak, and they'd need to have someone else cover for the unreliable guest speaker.

After a long drive up, we skipped setting up and settling in at the campsite, because it looked like we might only be a few minutes late if we went straight to the meeting. I looked a mess, but if they still needed me to speak, I was going to be there. Most of us hadn't showered, and my 13-year-old was wearing one-piece pajamas, but I wasn't too concerned because Sukkot's a time to camp, and that's just how it is when you're camping. So we walked into that

meeting looking maybe just a little bit like a homeless family, and everyone else in there was wearing nice dresses and suits (I don't even own a suit). I knew it was church, but it's a camping church. We absolutely believe in dressing up out of respect when we go to church, but we don't wear jackets and ties when we camp. It was a little embarrassing for us (maybe a little more so for my daughter in the fuzzy PJs) .... All you can do is either laugh or cry, right?

This was how God set the table for our family at His final feast days this year. We weren't sure where we'd stay. The people there were unfamiliar. Our community seemed resistant to even going in the first place. We had trouble getting out of town to start going that way. I was unprepared, uncomfortable, and afraid.

What an amazing reminder of the Exodus wilderness experience.

And the rest of the feast days were no less amazing:

A whole bunch of people from our community did join us for a great time of fellowship. Because of all the difficulties with campsites and accommodations, our group ended up in 3 different places, and we were able to use the various facilities for activities and events (the campfire at one place, the swimming pool at another, a conference room for activities at the other place, etc). All the people were gracious and kind and generally awesome (my kids even made some friends). The messages were good (even the ones I gave, I think). Singing praise and worship was such a sweet time (in the services and around the campfire). And, most importantly, it was obvious that

The Spirit of God was there. Lives and hearts were touched. Yahweh met with His people. He reminded us, again, that He wants to tabernacle among us.

This year's Feast of Tabernacles certainly wasn't the only time I've felt out of place or like I didn't belong. That story of a broken disengaged child and a disconnected teen that became a purposeless man is my story. I suspect most of us have a similar story. I think the reason I spent so much time feeling empty and out of place is that this isn't the place I was designed for, and I spent too much time trying to figure out how to make it all work out anyway. I didn't belong, and I wanted to feel like I did.

When we live out God's pattern, it doesn't always seem to work out the way we think it should or look how we would have planned (actually, it never looks the way I would have planned). But ultimately, it is always a blessing to walk in His ways. His feasts are about practicing a pattern that He designed and calls us to, whether we understand any of it or not. His feasts are a call to unity and to community for His people - not just the little congregational gathering that I attend. At Sukkot, we remember His people in the wilderness. We remember the journey we're called to in this wilderness. We remember the hardships and God's provision; the disobedience and the necessary trust; the failures and victories. We remember that we were not intended to walk through this desert alone but in community. We remember that Yahweh dwells among His people, that we are not only called to make a place for Him, but that His place belongs at the center of everything, and that we belong with Him.

# The Gospel of John – The Holy Day Gospel

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The Gospel According to John has been heralded by many as being the most significant book in the New Testament – and for good reason. From it, we get the most in-depth understanding of the relationship that the Father and the Son had from the beginning. From the last message to the disciples in Chapter 14, 15, and 16, we listen to Christ’s passionate instruction to the Church and His relationship to them. From the prayer of Christ to the Father in chapter 17, we gain unique insight into the pre-existence of Christ and the unity between the Father and Son. Also, the seven “I Am” statements are found in no other place but in the Gospel of John:

- “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6:35).
- “I am the Light of the World” (John 8:12).
- “I am the Door” (John 10:9).
- “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11).
- “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11:25).
- “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6).
- “I am the True Vine” (John 15:1).

But there is another very unique characteristic of the Gospel of John that most all commentaries, theologians, and pastors “forget” to take note of. It is the Elephant in the room that no one wants to acknowledge. **And that is the fact that almost ALL of the book takes place on or during a Hebrew Holy Day season.** Other than the introduction in chapter one, the brief story of the Wedding of Cana (to which many weddings took place during the Spring Festival season), and chapter 21 that takes place after Messiah’s resurrection, **the rest of the book centers around the Sacred Assemblies – God’s Holydays.**

- John 2:13: “The **Passover of the Jews** was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

- John 4:35 [**Pentecost**] “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”
- John 5:1: [**Trumpets**] “After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”
- John 6:4: “Now the **Passover, the feast of the Jews**, was at hand.”
- John 7:2: “Now the **Jews’ Feast of Booths** was at hand.”
- John 7:37 “On the **last day, that Great day of the Feast**, Jesus stood and cried out”
- John 10:22: “At that time the **Feast of Dedication** took place at Jerusalem.”
- John 11:55: “Now the **Passover of the Jews** was at hand”
- John 13:1: “Now before the **Feast of the Passover**”

The Gospel of John could be easily called the Holy Day Gospel.

So why did John focus the entire book on these Hebrew festivals?

Well, it is important to understand the timing of when this gospel was written. As many bible students recognize the 3½ year ministry of Jesus Christ took place from the Autumn of 26 AD to the spring of 30 AD. While many may argue this date by a year or two, what few debate is that it wasn’t until the 60’s AD when the synoptic gospels were written – Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Although a 30-year gap, it was well within the lifetime of the Jerusalem Church that directly witnessed these events, and **very little had changed** in this time.

However, by the time John wrote his account of the ministry of Christ, **dramatic changes had taken**



**place in Judea.** Most all of the Jerusalem church had fled the area of Judea by 67 AD. Soon afterward, the armies of Rome surrounded the city, and by 70 AD Jerusalem had been captured, the Temple was destroyed, and many Jews were being sold off into slavery. According to Josephus, the city of Jerusalem alone produced at least 100,000 Jewish slaves. The entire force of the Roman empire had come down upon the Jewish people. The headquarters church at Jerusalem was gone, and the Apostles James, Peter, and Paul had been martyred.

Because of the intense persecution of the Jews, many Christians, including Jewish Christians, sought to distance themselves from Judaism. **Antisemitism was growing rapidly**, and this sentiment was beginning to influence Christianity. Also, John had been battling Gnosticism, where Greek philosophy was being applied to the teachings of Christ as an attempt to harmonize Christianity with Hellenistic beliefs. Then, in 95 AD, the Apostle John was exiled to the Island of Patmos under the rule of Emperor Domitian. After Domitian's death in 96 AD, John was released from exile and resumed his duties as an elder, pastor, and apostle. Upon his return antisemitism and Gnosticism had only grown stronger. **It was in this environment that John wrote his gospel.**

Unlike the Synoptic gospels who had used colloquial, local terms that were common in Jerusalem in the 30's AD, John uses more official, Hebraic terms that the readers of the TaNaK in the 90s AD would understand. But the most striking unique characteristic that John clearly shows in his gospel was that Christ was a Jew who kept the Mosaic law, the Seventh day Sabbath, and Hebrew Holydays. John was making it clear that Christ never observed Roman or Greek festivals. **He kept the Feast of the Jews – God's sacred assemblies** described in the Torah.

It is very easy to deduce that the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, in Chapter 4, takes place **on Pentecost**, known also as Shavalot. The Messiah is telling the woman in John 4:35:

*Do not say that there are yet four months, and then the harvest comes. I say to you, look around. Lift up*

*your eyes and see the fields, for they are already white to harvest.*

As many commentaries bring out, Pentecost takes place during the Spring harvest in Israel, and the fall Feast of Ingatherings takes place 4 months later. But why did Christ say the fields are white, ready to harvest on the Feast of Pentecost? If you want to know, keep the Feast!

In chapter 7 and in verse 37 John records that on the Last day, the Great Day of the Feast, Jesus stood and called out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Why was our Messiah offering rivers of living waters on the 8th day Feast, The Last Great Day? If you want to know, keep the Feast!

John chapter 5 records Christ "going up to" Jerusalem during the Fall Festival season, most likely in 28 AD. These Festivals include the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah), Atonement (Yom Kuppur), and Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth) where He spoke in detail about the resurrection, judgment, and eternal life. Why did Christ speak about the resurrection, judgment, and eternal life during the Fall Festivals? If you want to know, keep the Feast!

The perverbial question many Christians like to advertise is "**What would Jesus do?**" Well, in this discussion, we have no need to ask ourselves this question because we know exactly what Jesus did do – **He faithfully kept God's holy days.** John tells us in 1 John 2:6 that if we say we abide in Him ought Himself also so to walk, even as He walked. And yet, very few Christians keep either the weekly or the annual Sabbaths that Christ kept holy.

There are unique prophetic and spiritual lessons found in each of God's seven annual Holydays, and these lessons are explained in the Gospel of John. And this Gospel can only be understood by those who are keeping those Festivals. Those who have rejected the relevance of His Sacred assemblies are not walking as He walked and will not understand the prophetic keys of those festivals. If you want to fully understand the Festival Gospel of John, you must keep those Festivals.

# THE PATH TO RESTORATION

Dorothy Ogren  
(KJV)



Have you ever thought about the comparisons between the Feasts that God gave His people in Leviticus 23 and the Christianized pagan holidays that most of Christendom has adopted in place of God's Feasts? For instance, Passover focuses on the death of Jesus on the cross which takes away the sins of the world, and the Days of Unleavened Bread teaches us the need to rid our lives of sin. But – Easter (some call it Resurrection Day, which is more Biblical) has replaced the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Yes, the resurrection of Jesus is usually acknowledged, but many times the main focus is on the Easter bunny and finding the eggs that it has left for the children to find. The Feast of Tabernacles, celebrated in September or October each year, was the time when Jesus was actually born in human form. It was when He came to Tabernacle among men. And it has great prophetic meaning. But Christmas, on December 25, is now celebrated as His birth – and the celebration is nothing like His birth as described in the Bible. Now there are glittering lights everywhere, catchy Christmas carols playing constantly, presents galore, a jolly Santa Claus who knows everything you have done all year long, parties, drinking, decorated trees, etc. Where is any of

that in the Bible? Where is Jesus in any of that? But we can find much of those traditions in the pagan holiday it was derived from. I have come to this conclusion: the keeping of the Feasts of God feeds the inner man and draws him into closer fellowship with our Creator, the One who ordained these Feasts. They focus the mind on that full salvation plan and redemption that God ordained from the beginning of the world, and keeps one watching for the return of the Messiah through the meaning of these Feasts. The holidays the Christian church now keeps in place of God's festivals feed only the flesh and little else.

In reality, God's Feasts show us His plan of redemption and restoration through the order in which each Feast comes each year. They give us a "Kingdom" mind, rather than a worldly focus. And in the center of each Feast, we find Jesus. He is our Passover Lamb Who takes away the sin of the world: He is our redeemer from sin; He is the Living Word written in our hearts; He is the coming Messiah and King of peace; He is the Judge; He is the Prince of Peace; He is the Bridegroom; He is Giver of Living Water, and so much more.

We go to Leviticus 23 to find all of God's Holy

Days listed, along with when they should be kept and of what they are a shadow. But in reality, they began in Genesis 1:14 with the word “seasons” which in the Hebrew means *festival, appointed time, assembly, feast*. Interesting, isn’t it? Also very interesting is the fact that the word “Feasts” in Leviticus 23:2 is the same Hebrew root word – same meaning exactly. The first Feast listed in Leviticus 23 is the weekly 7th day Sabbath. You may have never thought of it as a Feast, but there it is declared to be so – a holy convocation each week unto the Lord. We can trace the beginning of the Sabbath as a holy day back to the week of creation – it was the 7th day of creation. Who can change the days or order of the creation in Genesis 1 and 2? It can’t be done. The first day of the week, which some now claim to be the day God set apart for rest, can never be exchanged for the seventh day. It is not in the power of man to be able to change any of it. God, in His infinite wisdom, set all things in motion and order by His Word and who can change God’s Word? No one. The Sabbath is not only a day that looks back to creation, for God declared that He had ended His works and rested from them on that day, but it looks forward as a prophetic day to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ when He rules and reigns on earth, and peace and rest cover the land. (You see, the coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ was finished in that week of creation also – God did it all in 6 days and ended His work. And it was all done by the spoken Word.)

A quick overview of the other Feasts are:

Passover – representing the blood of Jesus covering the doorposts of our hearts and leading us out of sin. Unleavened Bread for seven days – represents putting sin out of our lives. (First fruits is included in that week, representing the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.)

Pentecost comes next - 50 days after Passover. It is believed that Moses received the Law from God on Mt. Sinai on the Day of Pentecost. How does that compare to the Pentecost in Acts 2? I believe that the infilling of the Holy Spirit quickens the Word of God written on our hearts and makes it a living Word of God, filling us with life and power (the New Covenant, Heb. 8:10). It was no more just a spoken Word, as in the beginning. It was no longer written on

tables of stone, but now it is written on the heart of those who have covenanted with God and sealed it with the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It has superseded human nature and gives us a spiritual nature. We are still in the era of Pentecost when the Church was commissioned to “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.” But that time is growing short. Jesus said to “work, for the night is coming.”

Next comes the Day of Trumpets – and an announcement being made. Announcement of what? The coming of Jesus. Paul states that when the last trump sounds, the dead in Christ will be raised and those living will caught up in the air by the angels, to meet the coming Messiah in the clouds (see I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonian 4:15-18). The last trump to sound is in Revelation 11 and declares that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.

Next is the Day of Atonement. Because the word atonement denotes blood shed for sins, some think this is a repeat of the Passover. Jesus did atone for our sins on Passover, but this day looks to something different. In the pattern of God’s plan for a restored world, the next thing to happen after Christ sets up His kingdom would be the Judgment. In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest made atonement for his own sins, then the sins of his family, and last for the sins of the nation. It is a solemn feast day. In Matthew 24 Jesus gives us the signs that lead up to His second coming. And in the very next chapter, He gives us parables of what it will be like when He comes – some will be ready and watching, while others will miss the entrance into His Kingdom. In Matthew 25:32 to the end of the chapter, it tells of the judgment of the nations. I connect this back to the Old Testament when the high priest made atonement for the nation. In Matthew 25:31, Jesus sits on His throne and all nations are gathered before Him to be judged. This can perhaps be compared to a physical harvest when the “wheat and the tares” are separated. Those who have repented and have their sins atoned for will be separated from those who have not.

Next comes the feast of rejoicing, which is the Feast of Tabernacles and focuses our spiritual sight

on the earthly reign of Jesus Christ when peace prevails over the whole earth. Zechariah 14:16-18, among other scriptures, tells us that during Christ's earthly reign, all nations will go up to worship in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. If they don't, then they will have drought in their nation. This is certainly not a feast that should by any means be ignored. This Feast is symbolic of the harvest being over and the workers rejoicing in the fruit of their labors.

And attached to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles is the Last Great Day of the Feast, that day when Jesus cried out "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink" (John 7:37). What this Last Great Day pictures in God's yearly Feasts is detailed out for us in the last few chapters of Revelation. In chapter 19 the saints are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; in chapter 20 our last enemy, which is death, is destroyed; and in chapters 21 and 22 the dwelling place that Jesus went to prepare for us (John 14:2) comes down from God out of heaven. Eternity has begun! I so love reading chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation. There is so much richness in it, so many joyous promises, and total restoration back to God's original plan for mankind. There is no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain. What joy! No more funerals to go to, no more wheelchairs or crutches, no more need for hospitals, etc. Jesus will be there and will light the whole city – the New Jerusalem. If you compare Revelation 21 and 22 with Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, you will find many similarities between the two. Referring back to Jesus' words in John 7:37, we find that this living water He speaks of flows from the throne of God and

out of the Lamb. I also see that this New Jerusalem is not made up of only New Testament people. It is a mixture of the Old and New Testaments. It's foundation is on the 12 Apostles and the redeeming Gospel of Jesus Christ, the power of His blood to save and redeem. But to enter the City, one has to go through a gate that has the name of one of the Tribes of Israel over it. In other words, the law and the prophets are part of the building of this City as well as the Apostles and their ministry to the Gentiles. Note that as the Garden of Eden had the Tree of Life, so it is in the New Jerusalem, producing 12 kinds of fruit. Do you notice a pattern here - 12 foundations, 12 gates, 12 fruits? The City is four square, meaning it is equal in height, depth, and width on each of the four sides. In 28:15-20 the Priest's breastplate was foursquare and had 12 stones, 3 on each side. The foundations of this new city are garnished with 12 different precious stones. And this brings me to the final Scripture that I will use – Malachi 3:17, "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him."

Do you see how God has a plan and He gives us days off from the toil of this life so that we can focus and look ahead to His beautiful plan to restore all things? He lets us get together, to mull over these precious times that are coming, to encourage one another to keep our focus on Jesus and be watching for our King's return. How wonderful of our Father God to share such insights with us through His Feasts. What precious times of refreshing that come from these festivals – from God Himself.

# **ACTS**

## **Advocating Christ The Savior**

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# Mr. Murrey's Q. & A.

*"You got questions,  
Al's got Biblical answers."*

(NKJV)



## QUESTION:

### Which day are we supposed to go to Church?

Greetings: Thanks for sending your question to BibleStudy.org. Scriptural citations are from the New King James Bible.

The seventh day of the week, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, is called the Sabbath. It is a holy convocation or meeting day for God's people.

The Eternal God established the Sabbath in creation week on the seventh day. Read:

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.

Gen 2:2 And **on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.**

Gen 2:3 Then **God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it**, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

God blessed and sanctified the seventh day making it a rest day. Sanctify means to set apart as different from the first six days of the week. To keep the Sabbath is the fourth commandment that God gave to Moses and Israel:

Exodus 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Exo 20:9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

Exo 20:10 but **the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.**

Exo 20:11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore **the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.**

We see that a person is to do no work on the Sabbath day. Note that it is also a holy convocation or meeting time:

Leviticus 23:3 'Six days shall work be done, but **the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it;** it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

According to Strong's Bible Dictionary, the Hebrew word for convocation, miqra, can mean a public meeting. Observance of the Sabbath is also a sign of God's people:

Ezekiel 20:19 I am the LORD your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them;

Eze 20:20 **hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you**, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.'

How about the Sabbath in New Testament times? Notice it was Jesus Christ's custom to keep the Sabbath as all Jews did:

Luke 4:16 So He (*Jesus*) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And **as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.**

Jesus also said He is Lord of the Sabbath:

Mark 2:27 And He said to them, "**The Sabbath was made for man**, and not man for the Sabbath.

Mar 2:28 Therefore **the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.**"

Clearly, the Sabbath is a time of assembly for God's people. You can read more about the Sabbath on our website by going to:

[https://www.biblestudy.org/search.php?zoom\\_query=Sabbath+day&x=14&y=4&zoom\\_per\\_page=7#google\\_vignette](https://www.biblestudy.org/search.php?zoom_query=Sabbath+day&x=14&y=4&zoom_per_page=7#google_vignette)

In summary, the seventh day, from sunset to sunset, is God's meeting day for His people.

Sincerely,

Team Member, Al

# Numerology and Bible Prophecy

Abrahm Joseph Sanchez  
(AFV)

Our Creator is a God of order, balance and beauty. He is systematic and predictable (Mal 3:6; Heb 3:8). Balance and precision can be seen everywhere in his creation. As we know the mathematical components necessary for successful flight are rigid, precise and exact, and yet our Creator has conquered it with beauty and majesty. Hundreds of species of birds are much more beautiful and nimble in air than man will ever be, but our Creator does it in style. Multiple types of aquatic shells follow very mathematical patterns in their formation known as the Fibonacci sequence or "Golden Ratio". This same ratio is found everywhere in the human body. The ratio of and by itself provides no evolutionary advantage, but is a testimony to the fact that our Creator is mathematical, systematic and orderly.

And because of this we should not be surprised that we see numerical patterns and order in scripture. For instance not only was the creation of Genesis 1:3 completed in 7 days but we see the numerical significance of 7 showing up everywhere throughout scripture.

- God blessed the seventh day and made it holy
- God has seven annual holy days outlining the plan of salvation (Leviticus 23)
- Noah had seven pairs of clean animals on the arc. (Genesis 7:2, 4)
- Every seventh year was a Sabbatical year during which the land would rest and debts would be forgiven. (Leviticus 25:4)
- Sevenfold blessing offered to Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3)
- In the Book of Revelation the number seven appears prominently including seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, and seven spirits of God.
- Seven is used repeatedly for blessings and cursings (Lev 26, Deut 28, Gen 12)
- The Holy Scriptures are comprised of 49 Books (7x7) with seven divisions.

No doubt certain numbers hold great significance to God and testify that He is orderly, systematic and thorough.

And because of this specific numerical patterns are used frequently in prophecy as in the Seventy weeks prophecy given in Daniel Chapter nine.

**Dan 9:25&26 AFV** Know therefore and understand *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, to Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again with streets and the wall, even in troublous times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off,

History matches the prophecy. In 457 B.C the Persian king Artaxerxes gave a decree and supplied money to rebuild the Temple AND the walls of Jerusalem. Exactly 483 years later (7+62 weeks X 7) Christ began his ministry in 27 AD and 3 ½ years later He was cut off in the middle of the week (martyred) just as Daniel recorded.

Not only was the timing of when the Messiah was to come fit a numerical prophecy but His genealogy also fit a numerical pattern. According to chapter one of Matthew:

So then, all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen generations. Matthew 1:7

But why fourteen generations? Well as all Hebrew readers know, there are no numerical characters in ancient Hebrew. Like Roman numerals, Hebrew letters are used to denote numbers. Aleph א is 1. Beth ב is 2 and so forth. The word David דָּוִד is Daleth, Vau, Daleth that has a numerical value of 4,6,4 with a total of 14. The name David has a numerical value of 14, hence fourteen generations. The first coming of Jesus Christ was done in a predictable, orderly manner that followed a numerical pattern.

However, other numerical patterns are much more hidden and harder to decipher. For instance, in the blessings and cursings chapter of Leviticus 26, in multiple places God warns the Israelites that if they refuse to obey His commandments He would punish them 7 times for their sins which included:

- Those who hate you shall reign over you
- I will scatter you among the nations
- I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation

In Daniel 4, Dan 12:7 and Revelation 12:14 we learn that the word "times" can be interpreted as a year. Seven years would come to 2,520 days. And

from Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 we learn that a day can prophetically represent a year.

From history we know that the independent Kingdom of Judah fell in 604 BC during the first incursion of the Babylonians. Although the Temple and the city of Jerusalem wasn't destroyed until the second incursion, the deportation had already begun and those who remained were placed under tribute. It was at this time when Daniel and Ezekiel were taken captive. Since 604 BC the nation of Judah never regained its independence. They were always under the control of another empire: The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. And in 70 AD they were driven from their homeland, scattered and the Temple was destroyed as prophesied. It wasn't until the Balfour Declaration of 1917, exactly 2,520 years after they lost their independence to the Babylonians, that this curse was lifted and the Jews once regained their homeland and self rule. God is orderly, timely and predictive.

The Book of Revelation, more than any other book of the Bible, stands as a testimony to the importance that God places on numerical patterns such as:

- 7 Angels represented by 7 stars presiding over 7 churches represented by 7 lampstands with 7 letters to each Church.
- 24 Elders on 24 Thrones. 4 Living Creatures with 6 wings = 24 wings total
- 144,000 saints made up of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes.
- The New Jerusalem is 12,000 furlongs wide, long and high. A perfect Cube.
- The walls of the New Jerusalem is 144 cubits thick with 12 foundations, 12 stones, 12 gates and 12 pearls at each gate.
- 7 seals with 7 trumpets and 7 woes

However as many of us know throughout time, almost every failed prediction of the return of Christ involved numerology. For instance Hippolytus of Rome, an early Christian theologian, calculated that Christ would return around the year 500, based on the dimensions of Noah's Ark. Founder of the Millerite movement, William Miller predicted Christ's return on October 22, 1844. When it did not happen, it became known as the "Great Disappointment". His failed prediction relied almost entirely upon numerology- specifically the 70 weeks prophecy. Harold Camping incorrectly calculated the return of Jesus Christ and the rapture to May 21, 2011. He believed that God had given man 7,000 years on the earth since the date of Noah's flood which was calculated at 4990 BC.

So although numerology and numerical patterns are used heavily in Biblical prophecy, relying too

heavily on numerology to decipher end time bible prophecy is a recipe for disaster. By far the number one method used for making failed prophetic predictions throughout time involved numerology.

So should we ignore numerology as a method for deciphering end time bible prophecy? Absolutely not. There is an extremely vital key for decoding any prophetic clue that Christ gives in the parable of the fig tree.

**Luk 21:29-31 KJ2000** <sup>29</sup> And he spoke to them a parable; Look at the fig tree, and **all the trees**; <sup>30</sup> When they now shoot forth, you see and know of your own selves that summer is now near at hand. <sup>31</sup> So likewise you, when you see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is near at hand.

The point Yeshuah is making here is that if you watching to see if summer is near, you have to look at **all** of the trees and **all** of the signs - not just one! The colossal error that **ALL** failed predictions made is that they failed to look at **ALL** of the indicators. They found one numerical pattern or one sign that looked alarming. They read too much into a single prophecy and based prediction on one or two signs that many times were a stretch. We have to look at all the prophetic warnings that Christ, John, Paul, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and ALL the prophets gave about the Time of the End.

However, as always, we need to remember Daniel 12:10:

Many shall be purified, and made white, and refined. But the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the **wise** shall understand.

The English word "wise" here is translated from the Hebrew word sakal שָׂכַל which many times is translated as blessed as in 2 Kings 18:7

And the LORD was with Hezekiah. He was **blessed** wherever he went.

Why was Hezekiah blessed? Why was he sakal? Scripture explains it clearly in the previous verse:

For he clung to the LORD. He did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments which the LORD commanded Moses.

If we cling to the Lord, and depart not from following Him, and keep His commandments we will be blessed. We will understand. But no matter what our level of prophetic research, no matter how much time we spend looking for numerical patterns, if we do not cling to the LORD, if we depart from Him, if we are accounted with the wicked we will understand nothing.

May the Lord God of Israel grant us wisdom in these times.

# Should We Study End Time Prophecy? Can We Even Know?

Abraham Joseph Sanchez  
(AFV)

Since Medieval times, thinkers, nobleman and mathematicians made multiple attempts to create a flying machine. The 9th century Spanish inventor Abbas Ibn Firnas attempted to fly by jumping off a cliff with wooden wings covered in feathers. He actually survived. Over the centuries hundreds of would be aviators experimented with failed flying machines ranging from simplistic designs to the bizarre.

Over the centuries the dreamers of flight came and went, but it was the Industrial Revolution and the advent of the internal combustion engine, that brought new interest in solving this old problem. By the end of the 19th century scores of new inventors competed to be the first man to fly.

However, at the same time these experiments were taking place, prominent figures in science and engineering such as Lord Kelvin (one of the most respected physicists of the 19th Century) and Simon Newcomb (renowned astronomer and mathematician) mocked and ridiculed their efforts. Both of these figures essentially used the “*appeal to failure*” fallacy by concluding that because all prior attempts at achieving powered flight had failed, the task itself was inherently impossible.

The “*appeal to failure*” or the “*argument from failure*” is a logical fallacy that assumes that **something can't be done** or a problem can't be solved because everyone else has failed to accomplish it.



Recently I was listening to a sermon by a pastor who due to the alarming times we are living in, had been receiving a lot of questions about end time bible prophecy including: “Are we living in the last days?”. Many of his congregants have been wisely considering “prepping” and storing food. However, he believed they were overreacting if not being paranoid. So instead of addressing this issue directly, he posed the following argument in his sermon: “Since the time of Christ there have always been people who believed they were living in the Last Days!” Using the “*argument from failure*” he was implying that because many in the past incorrectly believed they were living in the Last Days, your results will be no different.

Well in addition to this being a logical fallacy, there are multiple scriptures urging us to study, watch for and prepare for end time events. And these passages are clear if we are not watching and praying for insight—we most definitely can be caught off guard.

Revelation 3:3 AFV *Now then, **if you will not watch**, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you.*

I Thessalonians 5:4 -6 AFV *For you yourselves understand perfectly that the day of the Lord will come exactly as a thief comes by night. But you, brethren, are not in darkness **that the day of the Lord***

*should overtake you as a thief. So then, we should not sleep, as others do; but we should watch, and we should be sober.*

Luke 21:34 &36 AFV *Watch yourselves, lest your hearts be preoccupied with high living and drinking and the cares of this life, and **that day come upon you suddenly.** For as a snare it shall come upon all those who dwell on the face of the earth. **Watch therefore, and pray at all times that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.***

These passages are clear that the Day of the Lord will come as a trap, as a thief in the night to those who aren't watching. And if we are not watching, studying prophecy, and keeping an eye on current events, even the Saints of God can be caught off guard. Watching, studying end time events and comparing them to end time prophecy **IS A CONDITION** for escaping "*The Great Tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be again.*" (Matthew 24:21)

Many have believed that neither having an understanding of Bible prophecy or watching for end time events is a moral issue. It's more like a side hobby you do if you are bored. However these and many other passages by Christ and the apostles **are commands** telling us to watch and look out for these events. And these passages are clear, if we refuse to do so, there are severe repercussions.

Another argument that has been posed is in Acts chapter one. The Apostles asked Christ if they were living in the time of the end. He responded by saying.

*And He said to them, "**It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father has placed in His own authority;***

Act 1:7 AFV.

Many have interpreted this as to say **no one can know or should know** when Christ will return. Well the Prophet Daniel records a little more information when he asked the same question:

*And I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the end of these things?" And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the*

*words are closed up and sealed **until the time of the end.***

Dan 12:8-9 AFV.

It is clear from this passage that **it isn't** that no one can ever know. **These prophecies will be unsealed at the time of the end and we can know the meaning**— if we are watching and studying prophecy.

Another frequently quoted passage by those who want to down play the importance of end time prophecy is in Matthew 24:36

*But concerning that day, and the hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.*

The interpretation often given is that **no one can EVER know** the time of Christ's return- so there is no reason to try to decipher all of the symbols and clues. However, Daniel is clear that the Kingdom will be established exactly 1290 days after the abomination that makes desolate.

*And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there shall be **a thousand two hundred and ninety days.***

Daniel 12:11 AFV

So Christ isn't saying that no one can ever know the day. He is simply stating that currently in 30 AD, when he was talking to the disciples, no one knows, but "My Father only".

As a bible scholar and devout Christian, I have been surrounded by theologians and pastors who in the past have consistently searched to find any clue that they might be living in the Last Days. Over the years I have grown weary of these strained attempts. In many situations I have believed their predictions were a selfish attempt to scare their congregations into undying loyalty. However, these are not the times we are living in! Prophecy is moving forward at an alarming pace. The Modern nations of Israel are on the brink of collapse. The debt of the United States is in an unsustainable position that could turn us into Venezuela at any time. We are currently in a very thinly veiled proxy war with a nuclear superpower that could easily escalate out of control. Israel is being bombarded with rockets from all of its



neighbors while the UN is passing resolutions to join forces with their enemies. America with Western Europe is being overrun by foreigners. And all of the modern nations of Israel have fallen into gross moral decay.

We need to be watching.

As many of us know the Olivet Prophecy given in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 describes events at the time of the end. But it also was foreshadowed by events that took place in 70 AD in Jerusalem **as an illustration of what is to happen**. This relationship is also explained in terms of “type and antitype”. However when we compare the warnings given in these two chapters we see different instructions given depending on how much they were watching.

For instance, in Luke 21:20 Christ tells the apostles that when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies that those who are in the countryside flee to the hills. And those who were in Jerusalem to get out. As we know from history, this took place late in 69 AD when soon to be Emperor Vespasian was advancing his army for the siege of Jerusalem. Three months later the window to escape Jerusalem was over when the armies of Rome had blocked all roads around Jerusalem and prevented anyone from coming in or out. If you weren't watching, your fate was sealed.

Then in Matthew 24:15 we are told that if you are still in the area outside of Jerusalem, when you see the abomination of desolation, to leave in haste with nothing other than the clothes on your back:

*Then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; And let the one who is in the field not go back to take his garments.*

According to Roman religious practice, to receive protection from the god of war- Mars, a pig was sacrificed as part of the funeral rites of soldiers called suovetaurilia. No doubt after thousands of Roman soldiers were slain in the siege of Jerusalem, pigs were sacrificed to honor Mars. This along with the burning and looting of the Temple fulfilled the prophecy of the abomination of desolation. If you had waited for this sign to flee Judea for the mountains

you had literally waited till the last minute and wouldn't have time to get anything. If you were in Jerusalem, you either died in the siege or were being sold off into slavery by the Romans.

Dr. Earnest Martin confirms what we already know from history in his book “Restoring the Bible”, that Christians in Jerusalem and Judea **understood the times they were living in** and started leaving the area as early as 62 AD! **They were watching as instructed** and left early with the last stragglers leaving by 66 AD -a good 3-7 years before Jerusalem was surrounded by armies. They had discernment. They were watching.

There is belief by many Christians that as long as you generally are a good person and “love the Lord” that God is going to supernaturally save you from end time trials regardless of whether or not you are paying attention. This is found nowhere in scripture. In reality we see that God supernaturally saves his people by forewarning them through the clues given in prophecy that they have to watch for.

*Watch, therefore, because you do not know in what hour your Lord is coming.*

Mat 24:42 AFV.

As we watch current events, study bible prophecy and pray for discernment have to realize as well that prophetic knowledge alone is not going to save us. Because if we have not overcome and have not purified our lives, we will not understand.

*Many shall be purified, and made white, and refined. But the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.*

Dan 12:10 AFV.

Only those who have gone through a process of spiritual conversion, have been examining themselves to the measure of Jesus Christ(Ephesians 4:13) and have overcome (Rev 2) will have wisdom during these trying times. But none of the wicked will understand. But we have to watch.

*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is the one who is watching and is keeping his garments, so that he may not walk naked and they may not see his shame.*  
Rev 16:15 AFV

# The Value of Following the Feasts of the LORD Over Christianized Pagan Holidays

BYRON LEE SANCHEZ  
(ESV)



In modern Christianity, many believers have found themselves navigating a maze of traditions, celebrations, and holidays that are often far removed from the biblical narrative. While the Bible outlines seven specific Feasts of the LORD, which are described as "appointed times" for God's people, many mainstream Christian practices have instead adopted holidays with roots in paganism. This syncretism, or blending of different religious traditions, is problematic, as it shifts the focus away from God's commands and onto culturally appropriated elements such as bunnies, ghosts, goblins, ghouls, and even a fat man with flying reindeer. The contrast between the biblical Feasts and these Christianized pagan holidays reveals not only a difference in focus but a profound difference in meaning and worship.

## The Feasts of the LORD: A Brief Overview

The Feasts of the LORD are listed in Leviticus 23, where God calls them His "appointed feasts" (Leviticus 23:2). These festivals were commanded to be observed by the Israelites as a way of keeping them in close relationship with God, reminding them of His deliverance, provision, and future promises. Importantly, these Feasts are not just

"Jewish holidays," but God's Feasts—meant for all His people, now seen through the lens of Jesus Christ. Each of the seven Feasts points to a significant aspect of God's plan of salvation, culminating in the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom.

1. **Passover:** Commemorates Israel's deliverance from Egypt, symbolizing the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Lamb of God (John 1:29).
2. **Unleavened Bread:** A time of removing sin, symbolized by leaven, from our lives, and looking to the sinless life of Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. **Firstfruits:** Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the first to rise from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20).
4. **Pentecost:** Marks the giving of the Holy Spirit, the empowerment of the Church to carry out the Great Commission (Acts 2).
5. **Feast of Trumpets:** Points to the return of Christ, when the last trumpet will sound and the dead in Christ will rise (1 Corinthians 15:52).
6. **Day of Atonement:** Focuses on repentance and the ultimate removal of sin, pointing to Jesus as our High Priest and putting away the scapegoat for all of our sins (Hebrews 9:11-14).

**Feast of Tabernacles:** A foreshadowing of the Millennial Reign of Christ, when He will dwell ("tabernacle") with humanity (Revelation 21:3).

These Feasts are profound in their meaning, connecting believers directly to the redemptive work of God. They are appointed by God, not man, and are deeply spiritual, reflecting the story of salvation from the fall of man to the future reign of Jesus Christ.

## The Origins of Christianized Pagan Holidays

In contrast, many of the holidays celebrated by Christians today—such as Christmas, Easter, and Halloween—have roots in pagan traditions. While the

early Church may have intended to "Christianize" these practices, the result has often been a mix of pagan symbolism with Christian themes, which detracts from the biblical narrative.

1. **Christmas:** Though widely celebrated as the birth of Jesus, Christmas has no biblical foundation. The Bible does not specify the date of Jesus' birth, and many of the customs associated with Christmas, such as decorating a tree, exchanging gifts, and the figure of Santa Claus, have pagan origins. The winter solstice was a time of celebration in many pagan traditions, particularly the Roman holiday of Saturnalia. The use of evergreens, yule logs, and other symbols are vestiges of these pagan rituals.

2. **Easter:** Though celebrated as the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Easter's timing and many of its traditions are borrowed from pagan fertility festivals, particularly those associated with the goddess Eostre. Symbols such as eggs and rabbits are ancient fertility icons that have little to do with the resurrection of the Messiah.

**Halloween:** Celebrated as a time for dressing up as ghosts, goblins, and other supernatural beings, Halloween has its roots in the pagan festival of Samhain, a Celtic celebration of the dead. While some Christians attempt to "redeem" Halloween by reframing it as a harmless day for children's costumes and candy, its origins are deeply pagan and emphasize the supernatural and occult.

These holidays often shift the focus from God's clear instructions to human traditions and cultural practices. They mix pagan elements with a veneer of Christianity and obscure the true meaning of worship and obedience to God.

### **Biblical Warnings Against Pagan Practices**

Scripture provides clear warnings against adopting pagan practices in the worship of God. In **Deuteronomy 12:29-31**, God explicitly tells the Israelites not to inquire about how the pagans worship their gods, nor to imitate their practices:

"When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and

that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I also may do the same.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods."

God's warning here is clear: He will not accept worship that is tainted with pagan practices, even if it is done with the intent of worshipping Him. The seriousness of this command is seen throughout the Bible. In **Exodus 32**, the Israelites create a golden calf to represent God, using a pagan symbol to worship Him. God's response was one of anger, and many lost their lives as a result of this sin.

**Jeremiah 10:2-4** also speaks against adopting the customs of the nations, specifically addressing practices that resemble modern Christmas traditions:

"Thus says the LORD: 'Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the peoples are vanity. A tree from the forest is cut down and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. They decorate it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move.'"

This passage echoes the syncretism that has crept into modern Christianity, where the biblical message is often overshadowed by traditions that are not rooted in Scripture.

### **The Dangers of Syncretism**

Syncretism, the blending of biblical and pagan practices, is not only spiritually dangerous but also shifts the focus away from God's truth. Jesus said in **John 4:23-24** that true worshipers "must worship in spirit and truth." The addition of pagan elements detracts from the purity of worship that God desires. The prophet Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18) is a stark reminder that God does not tolerate divided loyalty.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-16** underscores the incompatibility of light and darkness, stating:

"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'"

God calls His people to be separate, holy, and distinct. The merging of pagan customs into Christian worship dilutes the message of God's holiness and distorts the witness of the Church.

### **Returning to the Feasts of the LORD**

The solution to this syncretism is simple: return to the Feasts of the LORD, which are rich in biblical meaning and ordained by God. These Feasts are not outdated or irrelevant, but deeply spiritual observances that connect believers to God's redemptive plan. They point us to Jesus Christ and His work of salvation, and they keep our focus on God's appointed times, not human traditions.

In **Colossians 2:16-17**, Paul writes:

"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ."

The Feasts of the LORD are not mere relics of the past; they are shadows of future events, with the substance being Christ. As believers, we are called to keep these sacred appointments with God, honoring Him in the way He has commanded, not in ways influenced by pagan traditions.

The biblical Feasts of the LORD are a call to holy living, to worship God in spirit and truth, and to reject the influence of pagan practices. Christianized holidays like Christmas, Easter, and Halloween often obscure the true meaning of worship and replace God's appointed times with human traditions. Scripture warns against this syncretism, and the Church is called to return to the clear teachings of the Bible, observing the Feasts of the LORD as holy convocations that glorify God and reveal His plan for humanity. By keeping these Feasts, we draw closer to our Heavenly Father and emulate His Son by following the examples set for us by the early Disciples and the Biblical Church of God.

*"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

**~ Isaiah 58:13-14 ESV**



# HALLOWEEN

Contributed by Mark Bowers and reprinted from “The Herald of Truth,” Vol. 27, No. 1981

Remember when you were just a little shaver in grade school? Every October the teachers would hang cardboard skeletons, witches and brooms, black cats, and ghosts in the windows and on the walls, and then read Halloween stories and sing Halloween songs. But, chances are, the teacher never told you where Halloween started or what a weird celebration it really is.

In fact, it's odd that a society as enlightened as ours is supposed to be celebrating what was originally a very pagan, very strange ritual. All things considered, it's remarkable – nay – eerie, that this ancient Celtic ceremony persists and is characterized today by symbols that existed even in the first ceremonies.

The earliest Halloween ceremonies were conducted in Europe by a group of Celtic religious leaders known as Druids around 270 B.C. The celebration was held to honor Samhain (End of Summer), Lord of the Dead, whose festival fell on November 1. Fortunately, some of the strange rites performed on this day no longer exist, but some of the symbolism still does.

For example, black cats. According to Druid belief, Samhain gathered together the souls of those who had died during the previous year to judge them. If their sins were too grievous to be forgiven, these souls were condemned to inhabit animal bodies (black cats) for the next 12 months, after which they would again be judged. If forgiven, they were permitted to leave the animal bodies and go to Druid Heaven.

The Celts believed that Samhain could be influenced in his decision if the price was right, so humans and horses were sacrificed. The human victims were usually criminals who had been rounded up for the occasion. They were sealed in cages of wicker and thatch, made in the form of animals and giants. The cages were then set afire and the unfortunates inside were slowly roasted.

After the Christians came, human sacrifices were outlawed, but the Druids preserved the symbolism of the ritual by burning black cats in the same way.



Incidentally, black cats were used because they were believed to be witches.

The ritual came to be known as Halloween as a result of the Christian influence. In Rome, the church observed a festival known as Feralia which was given to honor all the dead saints.

When Rome set out to Christianize the world, they eventually encountered the Celts and discovered the Samhain and Feralia festivals fell on the same day. Of course, the Roman priests hoped that the Celts would adopt the philosophies of the Feralia, but they discovered instead that the Celtic convert still held fast to his old beliefs. In a diplomatic move, the priests allowed the celebration to continue with a few major changes, such as no human sacrifices, etc., as long as they called it “All Saints Day” or Halloween.

But not all Celts were converted to Christianity and those who weren't continued to practice their pagan beliefs that the festival was a time for a gathering of spirits. Ghosts, goblins, fairies, and fire eventually became a part of the ritual and so also did witchcraft. In fact, that fire you light in your Jack O' Lantern is a carryover of the belief that fire was sacred and able to ward off evil spirits. Witches were burned, not as punishment, but as a means to purge their bodies of evil spirits.

So what we celebrate today is a pagan ceremony for the dead, complete with witches, black cats, ghosts and goblins, and called after a Christian festival given to honor dead saints. You didn't know we were so pagan, did you?



# A Clean Happy Heart

By Rowena Sanford

My son came home from school today with a bunch of halloween papers. "Mama, these are bad," he said, and started to cry. "You want to throw them in the fire. But I like them. I wish I didn't have them. I should throw them in the fire". Sensing the confusion he was feeling I sat down with him and took this piece of paper

This is  
your  
heart



the more we sin  
the more we  
want to sin.



one day  
with your heart  
you saw Jesus  
on the cross.

you were told  
that the blood  
of Jesus  
washes your  
heart clean.

You cried  
for Jesus  
to make  
your heart  
clean.



He  
did.

you were happy.  
you felt  
this love.  
You felt so good.



Day by day  
you and Jesus  
built a fence around  
your clean  
happy heart.

Inside was a garden  
of sweet  
smelling  
flowers

Outside was  
the old, cold  
world. Sometimes  
evil and  
rotten-smelling.

Every day you  
would go in to  
meet with Jesus  
and smell the  
flowers, and  
feel peace.

More and more  
you learned  
to love what  
God loves and  
hate what  
God hates



We would read stories  
together. you learned  
about sharing and  
obeying and  
being kind.



you and Jesus  
built the fence tighter  
and put posts closer  
together to keep out evil  
and to keep your heart pure



The devil and the world  
want to break down the  
fence, and let evil monsters  
and witches pop in to  
talk to you.

If you listen to them  
you will start to like  
them - just a little,  
and then a little more.

Your clean  
happy heart  
will begin  
to feel  
only



Jesus speaks  
softly and  
kindly,  
"keep your heart  
for me. Don't  
let bad things in.

I want you to be free from the evil  
of this world. you know what is  
bad. you feel upset when you start  
to like what is bad. you know  
you don't want to like it. Pray  
for my blood to keep your heart  
clean. Everytime you start  
to like what is bad.

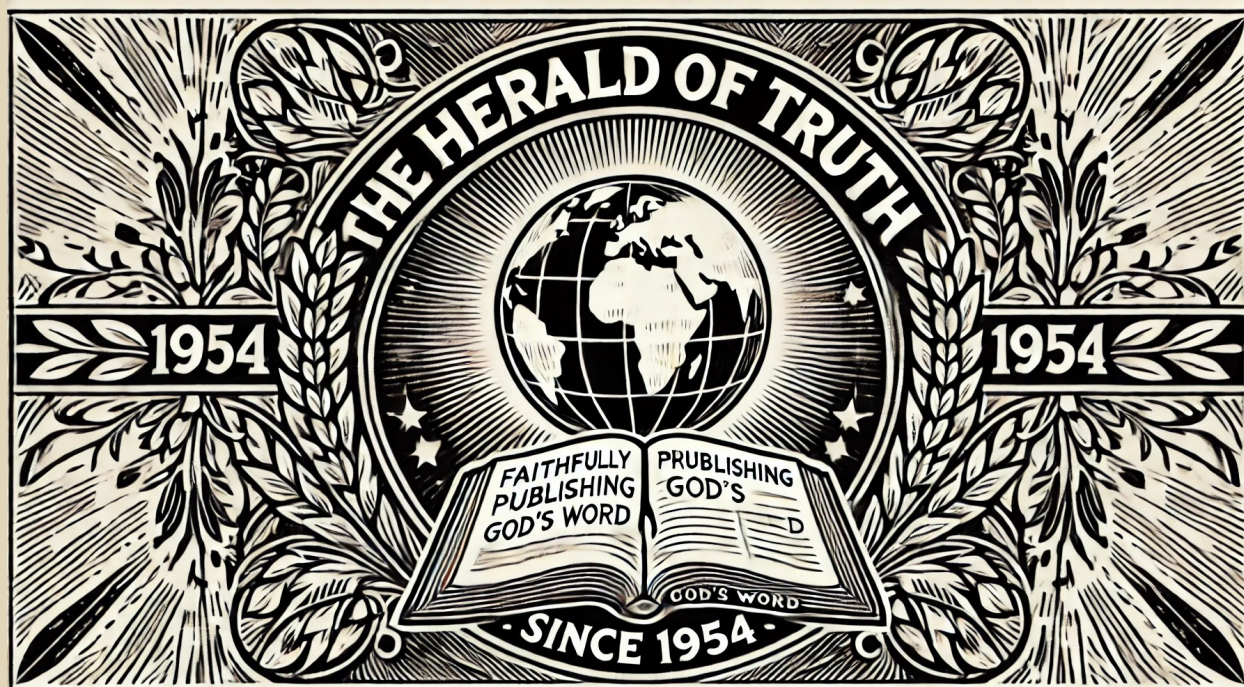
Come in to the garden  
with me. We will fix the  
holes in the fence.  
we will sit and be still.  
we will smell the flowers  
and listen to the birds.  
we will talk together.



Dear Jesus I thank you for coming into my heart.  
I thank you for making it clean. I want to keep  
it clean. I don't want any witches and evil  
monsters around. I don't want to like them.  
I want to like what you like and hate what you hate.  
I take your blood to wash me. I like to feel close to you.  
I love you. Thank you for setting me free.



## THE HERALD OF TRUTH



### Reaching the World Together! *Byron Lee Sanchez*: Editor-in-Chief

We recently took a leap of faith and made the financially risky decision to publish the 70th Anniversary of the *Herald of Truth*, which had been out of circulation for several years. I am pleased to announce that your kind donations covered the production costs and also made it possible for us to produce this current issue.

Your financial offerings have truly multiplied our reach, advancing the gospel in line with Jesus' call to "go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Each contribution supports the mission of equipping believers and sharing the good news with those seeking truth. As Paul encourages, "God loves a cheerful giver...so that having all sufficiency...you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:7-8). Through your generosity, we're able to place this resource in more hands, reminding us all of the power of united faith in spreading God's Word.

We're excited to offer a PDF version of the *Herald of Truth* both on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/7thDayCoGA/> and available at [theheraldoftruth.org](http://theheraldoftruth.org), and encourage you to share it digitally with friends, family, and church communities. Every shared copy is another opportunity to fulfill the Great Commission together, extending the reach of this ministry. Thank you for being part of this vital work. May God our Father richly bless and multiply each act of generosity, "not overlooking your work and the love you have shown for His name" (Hebrews 6:10).

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