

OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS (AND THE LAW) AS RELATES TO CHRISTIANS

The Old Testament feasts were instituted by God so that the children of Israel would not forget Him and all He had done for them. At the time of the feasts, all work was stopped. Everyone's attention was focused on remembering what God had done on their behalf. The purpose of gathering together, celebrating, and feasting was to honor Almighty God. Only the men were commanded to observe these significant events.

Exodus 23:14-17 NKJV) ""Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: {15} "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); {16} "and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. {17} "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD."

The Old Testament feasts were shadows and types of things to come that were fulfilled in the New Testament by Christ. Christ fulfilled all of them and so do we when we believe in Him as our Lord and Savior. If someone wants to celebrate Jewish feasts and holidays, they are free to do so. However, Scripture is clear that the "ordinances forever" are not meant to be applied under the New Covenant with Christ. In Him, we are free from the bondage of the law.

The Council of Jerusalem in the Book of Acts chapter 15 addresses this issue of Gentiles having to keep Jewish laws.

*(Acts 15:1-11 NKJV) "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." {2} Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. {3} So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. {4} And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. {5} But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." {6} Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. {7} And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. {8} "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, {9} "and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. {10} **"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?** {11} "But we*

believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.'"

(Acts 15:23-29 NKJV) "They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. {24} Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"; to whom we gave no such commandment; {25} it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, {26} men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. {27} We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. {28} **For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: {29} that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."**

(Galatians 5:1-6 NKJV) "**Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.** {2} Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. {3} And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. {4} You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. {5} For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. {6} For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love...{14} **For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**"

Christ has made us "one new people in him."

(Ephesians 2:11-16 ICB) "You were born non-Jews. You are the people the Jews call "uncircumcised." Those who call you "uncircumcised" call themselves "circumcised." (Their circumcision is only something they themselves do on their bodies.) {12} Remember that in the past you were without Christ. You were not citizens of Israel. And you had no part in the agreements with the promise that God made to his people. You had no hope, and you did not know God. {13} Yes, at one time you were far away from God. But now in Christ Jesus you are brought near to God through the blood of Christ's death. {14} Because of Christ we now have peace. Christ made both Jews and non-Jews one people. They were separated as if there were a wall between them. But Christ broke down that wall of hate by giving his own body. {15} **The Jewish law had many commands and rules. But Christ ended that law. Christ's purpose was to make the two groups of people become one new people in him.** By doing this Christ would make peace. {16} Through the cross Christ ended the hatred between the two groups. And after Christ made the two groups to be one body, he wanted to bring them back to God. Christ did this with his death on the cross."

*(Galatians 3:23-28 ICB) "Before this faith came, we were all held prisoners by the law. We had no freedom until God showed us the way of faith that was coming. {24} So the law was our master until Christ came. After Christ came, we could be made right with God through faith. {25} Now the way of faith has come, and we no longer live under the law. {26} You were all baptized into Christ, and so you were all clothed with Christ. This shows that you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. {27} {28} **Now, in Christ, there is no difference between Jew and Greek. There is no difference between slaves and free men. There is no difference between male and female. You are all the same in Christ Jesus.**"*

"Ordinance Forever"

All the following Scriptures are commands from God to the children of Israel to be an ordinance or statute "forever." What was the point of these "perpetual" ordinances? As with the Feasts, God wanted the children of Israel to have way to remember what He had done for them and give them the opportunity to fulfill their responsibility to honor Him on special holidays, the Sabbath, and in daily life.

Passover

(Exodus 12:14 KJV) "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."

*(Exodus 12:24 NKJV) ""And you shall observe this thing as an **ordinance** for you and your sons **forever.**"*

Pentecost

*Lev 23:21 - On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a **lasting ordinance** for the generations to come, wherever you live.*

Feast of Tabernacles

*Lev 23:41 - Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a **lasting ordinance for the generations to come**; celebrate it in the seventh month.*

Guidance of the Silver Trumpets (This was a call to remembrance of God in times of war and on feast days.)

*(Numbers 10:8 NKJV) ""The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow the trumpets; and these shall be to you as an **ordinance forever** throughout your generations."*

Offerings of fire (This Scripture is talking about burnt offerings and sacrifices. Note: Not even the Jewish people make sacrifices any more.)

(Numbers 15:2-3; 15 NKJV) ""Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you,

{3} 'and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock,"...{15}"One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an **ordinance forever** throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD."

Heave Offerings

(Numbers 18:8-11 NKJV) "And the LORD spoke to Aaron: "Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever. {9} "This shall be yours of the most holy things reserved from the fire: every offering of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, shall be most holy for you and your sons. {10} "In a most holy place you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you. {11} "This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an **ordinance forever**. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it."

(Numbers 18:11 NKJV) ""This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an **ordinance forever**. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it."

(Numbers 18:19 NKJV) ""All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an **ordinance forever**; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you.""

Temple worship ordinances

(2 Chronicles 2:4 NKJV) "Behold, I am building a temple for the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate it to Him, to burn before Him sweet incense, for the continual showbread, for the burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths, on the New Moons, and on the set feasts of the LORD our God. This is an **ordinance forever** to Israel."

Meat Offering

(Ezekiel 46:14 KJV) "And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD."

Sabbath

(Exodus 31:13-14, 16 KJV) "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you **throughout your generations**; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth

sanctify you. {14} Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: **every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.** {16} "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a **perpetual covenant.**"

Burnt Offering

(Exodus 29:42 KJV) "This shall be a continual burnt offering **throughout your generations** at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee."

Burning of Incense

(Exodus 30:8 KJV) "And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, **a perpetual incense** before the LORD throughout your generations."

Day of Atonement

(Exodus 30:10 KJV) "And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it **throughout your generations**: it is most holy unto the LORD."

Ceremonial washing

(Exodus 30:21 KJV) "So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed **throughout their generations.**"

Holy Anointing Oil

(Exodus 30:31 KJV) "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me **throughout your generations.**"

(Exodus 40:15 KJV) "And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations."

Prohibition from eating fat and blood

(Leviticus 3:17 KJV) "It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood."

Portions of offerings to be given to priests

(Leviticus 7:36 KJV) "Which the LORD commanded to be given them of the children of Israel, in the day that he anointed them, by a **statute for ever** throughout their generations."

Do not drink wine when you go into the tabernacle or you will die

(Leviticus 10:9 KJV) "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a **statute for ever** throughout your generations:"

City of Refuge and murder

(Numbers 35:29 KJV) "So these things shall be for a statute of judgment unto you **throughout your generations** in all your dwellings."

Additional statutes that were to be "for ever" for the children of Israel

(Leviticus 17:7 KJV) "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a **statute for ever** unto them throughout their generations."

(Leviticus 23:14 KJV) "And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a **statute for ever** throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

(Leviticus 23:21 KJV) "And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a **statute for ever** in all your dwellings throughout your generations."

(Leviticus 23:31 KJV) "Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a **statute for ever** throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

(Numbers 15:38 KJV) "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments **throughout their generations**, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:"

(Numbers 18:23 KJV) "But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a **statute for ever** throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance."

Conclusion

It was, and still is, impossible for the Jewish people, or anyone else, to keep all these ordinances and statutes. The only way to be truly reconciled to God is through the once for all time sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

(Romans 8:3-4 NLT) "The law of Moses could not save us, because of our sinful nature. But God put into effect a different plan to save us. He sent his own Son in a human body like ours, except that ours are sinful. God destroyed sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. {4} **He did this so that the requirement of the law would be fully accomplished for us who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.**"

Perspective on “keep the feast” from 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

(1 Corinthians 5:7-8 NKJV) "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. {8} Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians to set them straight about several serious matters. In 1 Corinthian Chapter 5 Paul is addressing the sexual immorality that is taking place in the church. He uses Passover, leaven and the feast as analogies.

(1 Corinthians 5:1 NLT) "I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you, something so evil that even the pagans don't do it. I am told that you have a man in your church who is living in sin with his father's wife."

The city of Corinth was known for extreme immorality. It was taking place not only among non-believers, but also with believers. It was being tolerated and not being dealt with in the church. Paul told them that this sin was going to affect the whole church just like a little bit of yeast makes a whole lump of dough rise.

(1 Corinthians 5:6 NKJV) "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

(1 Corinthians 5:6 NLT) "How terrible that you should boast about your spirituality, and yet you let this sort of thing go on. Don't you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected?"

In verse 7, Paul describes the immorality as “old leaven,” and he tells them to “purge it, get rid of it.”

(1 Corinthians 5:7 NLT) "Remove this wicked person from among you so that you can stay pure. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us."

He relates this to the time of Passover when the Jewish people would purge all the leaven out of their homes for 7 days to make their homes “pure.” He says that we are “a new lump.” We are unleavened because of Christ, who was our “Passover Lamb.” We must put away the old leaven of malice and wickedness and replace it with sincerity and truth. Therefore, let us live holy lives because of Christ.

Just as the Jews, when they celebrate Passover, get rid of all the leaven, (symbolic of sin), so should we (because of the sacrifice of Jesus), put away wickedness and live lives of purity, as we serve God.