

## HOLIDAYS AND FEASTS

Another year is coming to a close. And I was wondering what the Lord would have us learn at this time. I always get distressed at this time of year because of the whole concept of Christmas which is not scripturally sound.

Yesterday, as I was driving, I saw the vision of a vine that was alive and full. Cast along side of the vine were thousands of branches lying there. Some of the branches – very few of them – actually joined themselves to the vine and lived. Those that did not join themselves to the vine withered and died. Then I heard the voice of the Lord say, “This is the time we are in.”

It is a vision based on John 15. But the understanding was different.

God called out a people. We all know they are the Israelites. Both Old and New Testament tells us that the Jews are the chosen people. It was to the Jewish people that God entrusted His ways, His commandments, His promises, and His feasts that foretold His complete story of redemption.

Jesus Himself was a Jew, He honored and celebrated the Jewish feasts faithfully, as well as prophetically fulfilling each one. He will continue to fulfill each one until all the feasts are accomplished. But we have little, if any idea what those feasts are about. Christianity has made a concerted attempt to obliterate any understanding of our Jewish roots.

Let’s look at a little history, timeline and encapsulated teaching.

The Jewish Feasts:

1. The Spring Festivals: 7.5-8 weeks
  - a. Passover (Pesach): Instituted and Required by God
    - i. Fulfilled at the Crucifixion
    - ii. Comes in the Spring month of Nisan or Aviv
    - iii. Celebrates the Jews freedom from Egypt, the protection of God from the Angel of Death who struck all the first born of Egypt
    - iv. By spreading the blood by hyssop, there was blood at the feet (dripped), over the head (applied), at the right and left hands (applied) to prefigure the cross
    - v. Sacrifice of a yearling lamb without spot or blemish; eaten that night without breaking a bone (none of Jesus’ bones were broken) ; eaten with unleavened bread (representing sinless) and bitter herbs
    - vi. The following morning the sacrificial lamb was offered by the Priests
    - vii. By the time Jesus walked the earth, wine was added to the feast and represents “The Lord’s Supper” of bread and wine
  - b. Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamatzot): Instituted and Required by God
    - i. Fulfilled during the time Jesus’ body was in the grave
    - ii. Begins the evening after Passover and lasts for 7 days
    - iii. All leaven was removed from the house
    - iv. Only unleavened bread was eaten for the entire 7 days
    - v. Leaven is sin in our lives that must be removed
    - vi. The feast represents the sinless nature of the Sacrificial Lamb who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth (1 Peter 22)

- vii. The Seder represents the Savior who bears the stripes of our sin
  - c. The Feast of First Fruits (Chag Habikurim): Instituted and Required by God
    - i. Fulfilled at the resurrection of Jesus
    - ii. This is a 1-day festival celebrated the day after Sabbath, or after the first day of Unleavened Bread
    - iii. Marks the beginning of the (First Fruits) Barley Harvest which is followed by the harvest of other grains
    - iv. It is to be celebrated on the first day of the week following the Sabbath that follows Passover Day
    - v. There were other resurrections before Jesus, but they all were raised up only to die again
    - vi. Jesus was the First Fruits harvest, the promise of many more to come
  - d. Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (Shavouth): Instituted and Required by God
    - i. Fulfilled at the day of Pentecost. The church was actually established on this day as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was poured out on 3000 Jews
    - ii. 1-day festival celebrated exactly 50 days after Passover marking the end of the spring harvest and the beginning of the summer Wheat Harvest
    - iii. This was the day that the Hebrew Priests offered 2 loaves of leavened bread in the Temple representing the 2 peoples: Gentiles and Jews baptized into 1 body by the Spirit of God
    - iv. It represents the Day of Pentecost
2. The Summer Time
- a. Leviticus 23:22 tells the people not to fully harvest your land but leave the very corners of your field for the needy and the aliens to glean.
    - i. The feasts all have sequential prophetic outworkings and this admonition also has a prophetic outworking.
  - b. Pentecost has come, we are now in the summer of the Feasts and it is time for the laboring fields (John 4:35) We need to all be laboring for spiritual food for the needy and aliens, each working according to their gifts and callings, in due season of their appointment
3. The Fall Festivals: being September or October and encompass 22 days from the day of the first festival. These Feasts are yet to be fulfilled by Jesus, the Messiah.
- a. Feast of Trumpets (Yom T'ruah), (Rosh Hashana (The Head of the New Year)): Instituted and Required by God
    - i. This is the day of blowing trumpets and marks the end of the Wheat Harvest
    - ii. It came to be known as Rosh Hashana, The Head of the New Year, because it is believed that God created the heavens and earth on the first day of Tishrei (this day)
    - iii. The only requirement for keeping this day is the blowing of the shofar
      - 1. One of the reasons Moses and Joshua blew the shofar was to tell the people to move on
    - iv. In Paul's day, and today, the Jews observe this day with the blowing of 100 shofar blasts, the last of which is a long, extended blast known as the tekiah gedolah, the great blast
    - v. This is the time of repentance
    - vi. This is the blowing of the Trumpets that call the people together for 10 days of Judgment of Yom Kippur before the Creator
  - b. Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): Instituted and Required by God

- i. Under the law, atonement referred to the covering of sins
    - ii. This day is not actually a feast but a day of solemnity in which all the people are to afflict their souls for their individual and corporate or national sinfulness
    - iii. A goat was sacrificed and its blood brought to the High Priest to be sprinkled on the Holy of Holies; a second goat was then driven into the wilderness to symbolically carry away the sins of the people (scape goat)
    - iv. This was the day of prayer and fasting
    - v. During this feast, all Israel will be saved
  - c. Feast of Booths (Chag Hasukkoth) Tabernacles, Ingathering: Instituted and Required by God
    - i. This is a 7-day festival with an 8<sup>th</sup> day added to it (22<sup>nd</sup> Tishrei)
    - ii. They were to celebrate with the luval (myrtle and willow branches tied together with palm frond) and ethrog (citron, a fragrant and tasty citrus) representing the fruitfulness and beauty of the Promised Land
    - iii. By the time Jesus came, 2 additional features were added: the Pouring Out of Water and the Kindling of the Lights
      1. This symbolized the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Israel just before the Messiah comes (Jesus answered John 7:37-39)
      2. This light symbolized the Shichinah Glory of God (Jesus answered John 8:12)
    - iv. The ultimate fulfillment of Tabernacles is the Messianic Kingdom.
    - v. It is fulfilled in Revelation 21:3 when the tabernacle of God is with men
4. The Weekly Feast: The 8<sup>th</sup> Feast – The Weekly Sabbath
  - a. The Sabbath is set apart in that it is the first feast to be mentioned (Exodus 20:8) and that it is to be celebrated every week of the year on the 7<sup>th</sup> day
  - b. The typology of the physical rest of the Israelites under the Law is fulfilled in the scriptural rest that is the believer's from the moment of salvation through all eternity, from Calvary through Kingdom and beyond, from Passover through Tabernacles and through all eternity. Thus the Sabbath ties the 7 annual feasts together in a marvelous way, being the prototype of the blessing aspect of all of them

At the end of the Feasts, when they are ALL fulfilled, we will be in the period of time called the Messianic Age. The chief characteristics of the Messianic Age are:

- It will last for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3)
- Satan (and his demonic forces) will be bound in the Abyss during this time (Revelation 2:2-3)
- All the animals will be docile (Isaiah 11:6-9)
- The earth will give forth its full bounty and beauty (Isaiah 27:6; 35:1-2)
- Messiah Jesus will once again tabernacle with us (John 1:14)
- The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14)

We have replaced these holy-days and feasts that God prescribed with other holidays and feasts that have no scriptural foundation. In fact, they have pagan foundation, incorporated into the church with all Jewish elements deliberately removed. It became mandated by the Roman church to incorporate pagan holidays, in order to cleanse the church of Jewish tradition, persecuting any who continued to practice or remain in relationship with anything Jewish. A current example of this is Hallowe'en Day. Regularly entertained in the churches under the guise of safety for Christian kids to enjoy the same kind of "fun"

as the world. We are to be different, separate...not do the same thing separately, but not do what they do!

It became illegal to participate in Sabbath which was replaced by Sunday, the "Lord's Day", or more accurately, "the venerable day of the Sun". This official decree came in 321 AD when Constantine mandated Sunday as the day of rest. He went so far as to legislate people to work on the Sabbath. Constantine not only deliberately divorced the church from Judaism, but he married the church to paganism. The Roman anti-Semitism was based on their attitude towards the Jews as a conquered people, combined with the Greek intellectual mindset which demanded to analyze and control all thought. This determined all future decisions and Inquisitions, undermining the concept of obeying God just because He required it, with no benefit to the church leadership!.

The use of these Christian holidays was very simple. Origen of Alexandria verified the observance of several holidays and explained them as being useful to the simple believer.

We ourselves are accustomed to observe certain days. For example, there is the Lord's Day, the Preparation, Easter, and Pentecost....The majority of those who are accounted believers... require some sensible memorials to prevent spiritual things from passing completely away from their minds. For they are either unable or unwilling to keep every day in this manner. (*Against Celsus* 22, 23, Ante-Nicene Fathers 4.647-48 (c. 248 AD).)

How sad that these holidays have simply come from a necessity of keeping the people pious because without these holidays to remind them why they are Christian or even that they are Christian, they fall away. But that is exactly what the church did. They stripped away the "life" of our Judaic roots and brought in pagan celebrations to keep us interested in church. Instead of the church providing a spiritual way of life, it has been reduced to a social way of life as Biblical truth has been filtered through a pagan mindset.

As church leadership was removed from Jewish converts and placed in Greek control, there was more and more emphasis on pagan philosophy, and less on the message of Jesus. They believed the Greek philosophy was wisdom given by God, leading to a blending of truth and lies, and the idea that "laymen" had no need to know the scripture lest they come to "unacceptable conclusions". This model of the pagan temples kept the common man in relative ignorance, while the leaders were initiated into sacred mysteries!!!

Despite this early concern about paganism infiltrating Christianity, it seems that Christians began to develop a different perspective on the matter of pagan holidays. Rather than view them as a threat to Christianity, in time, pagan holidays and customs came to be seen as a way to encourage and ease conversion to Christianity.

God clearly states in Deuteronomy 12:30-32: "...Do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods . . . Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." *GN*

Currently recognized holidays:

- Advent: Pagan Festival later instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Instituted 567-581 by the Catholic Church

- Time of repentance for Christ's second coming
- Begins November 11 and ends December 24
- The Germanic season of Yule begins November 14 and ends December 13
- All Saint's Day: Pagan Festival later instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Day after Hallowe'en (Samhain)
  - To remember the Christian saints to counter Samhain's Celtic deities (Man, Myth, and Magic, Vol. 6, 1987, p. 177)
  - Villagers were encouraged to masquerade (as saints, angels and devils) on this day, not to frighten unwelcome spirits, but to honor Christian saints (Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History, 1998, pp. 9, 11)
  - Large bonfires were lit not in homage to the sun but to keep the devils away... (Halloween: An American Holiday, An American History, 1998, pp. 9, 11)
- April Fool's Day (All Fool's Day): Pagan Festival later instituted by governments
  - Instituted 1582 in France at the time the Gregorian calendar was introduced which moved New Year's from March 25-April 1 (New Year's Week) to January 1 (New Year's Day)
  - Originally it was to send people who did not know of the change to non-existent parties...April Fool
  - In Scotland it is called Taily Day; Rome: Festival of Hilaria celebrating the resurrection of the god Attis; India: Huli Festival
- Ash Wednesday: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Instituted February 4, 1573
  - Begins 46 days (40 days not including Sundays) before Easter
  - The ashes of the palm crosses from the previous Palm Sunday are burned and put on the foreheads of saints as a sign of repentance
- Boxing Day (Day of Good Will) (St. Stephen's Day: Instituted by the Catholic Church): Instituted by the Government
  - Celebrated December 26, St. Stephen's Day
  - Was called Christmas Sunday until 1993
  - Was originally the time to give boxes (presents) to slaves and the poor
  - St. Stephen's Day – Day of the Wren; day of visiting families, dancing and singing
  - Wales: included beating female servants and late risers with holly
  - The day of the song Good King Wencelas giving alms to poor peasants
- Christmas or Yule: Pagan Festival later instituted by the Catholic Church
  - German/Gothic origins
  - Originally celebrated November 14-December 13
  - December 25 when the Julian calendar was adopted
  - Also Saturnalia, the Roman winter festival and The Wild Hunt
  - December 25 was the beginning of the pagan year that honored the Germanic divine "mothers"
  - Hákon the Good was the first to institute Christmas to coincide the Yule feast to hide his Christianity in 840 AD
  - It was a feast of ale and food with a great number of animal sacrifices smeared on the pillars of idols
  - Simek cites section 7 of Gulapingslög, where Yule is described as celebrated "for a fertile and peaceful season" and consists of a fertility sacrifice and is associated solely with Odin

- Easter: Pagan Festival later instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Originally Easter season lasted from Easter Sunday 40 days to the Day of Ascension, but now lasts 50 days to the Day of Pentecost
  - Germanic holiday named after the goddess Éostre (Ostara) of Anglo Saxon paganism which included hares and eggs
  - The days of Easter are flexible to ensure Easter ends on Sunday
  - The First Council of Nicaea instituted the date for Easter in 325 AD assuring the date of Easter to be independent of any Jewish calculation to determine the date for Passover thus avoiding the possibility of secret Passover celebrations
- Epiphany: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - January 6 (or January 19) celebrating the visit of the Magi to the baby Jesus and the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River
  - Instituted in 361 AD (first mention by Ammianus Marcellinus)
  - Also celebrated as Little Christmas in some countries
- Hallowe'en (Celtic festival of Samhain), Festival of the Dead: Pagan Festival
  - A festival celebrating fire, the dead and the powers of darkness
  - It comes from the old Irish word meaning Summer's end
  - The original festival celebrated the end of the "lighter half" of the year and the beginning of the "darker half" of the year
  - It is the beginning of the Celtic New Year
  - The ancient Celts believed that the border between this world and the Otherworld became thin on Samhain allowing spirits to pass through
  - The family's ancestors were invited home while harmful spirits were warded off
  - The purpose of costumes and masks was to disguise oneself as a harmful spirit and thus avoid harm
  - People and livestock would pass between 2 bonfires as a cleansing process
  - The name was instituted in 1556 as All-Hallows-Eve to commemorate the eve before All Saints Day
  - The souling practice of commemorating the souls in purgatory with candle lanterns carved from turnips and placed in windows to ward off evil spirits became adapted into the making of jack-o-lanterns
  - Hallowe'en imagery includes themes of death, evil, the occult, magick, and mythical monsters. Traditional characters include ghosts, witches, skeletons, vampires, werewolves, bats and black cats
  - The colors black and orange come from the blackness of night and the color of fire
  - Some churches celebrate this day as Reformation Day to celebrate the reformation of the Protestant Church
- Lent: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - A 40-day period to prepare the believer through prayer, penitence, almsgiving and self-denial for the death and resurrection of Jesus
  - Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes 44-46 days later
  - The Lenten semi-fast began during the era of subsistence agriculture in the West as food stored away the previous autumn was running out – called in England the Hungry Gap
  - Lent is marked by fasting of foods and festivities and by acts of penance (prayer, fasting and almsgiving)

- Lent is a season of grief, sorrowful reflection and is called in the East “Bright Sadness”
- Originally a pagan holiday following traditional carnival celebrations
- Lent includes avoiding animal products (fish, eggs, milk, fowl) because they lead to lust
  - However, dispensations for dairy products was given for donations received
- Mardi Gras: Pagan Festival
  - The original term was Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday) season which ended the day before Ash Wednesday
  - It was the Carnival between Epiphany or Twelfth Night and Ash Wednesday
  - They are now most famous in New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro and Quebec City
  - It is known for its incredible excesses
- New Year’s Day: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - January 1 or January 14 (Gregorian Calendar)
  - Originally celebrated in Rome on March 1: Spring Equinox
  - Instituted in 1752 as the Feast of the Circumcision being the 8<sup>th</sup> day after December 25
  - Celebrated in different countries by the polar bear plunge, extra football rounds, Rose Bowl, concerts, parades, ski jumping, etc.
- Palm Sunday: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - The Sunday before Easter
  - Celebrates the Sunday of the Passion of Christ
- St. Andrew’s Day: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Celebrating St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland
  - November 30
  - Having him as the patron saint of Scotland allowed Scotland to appeal to the Pope in 1320 for protection against the attempts of the English kings to conquer Scotland
- St. Patrick’s Day: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Celebrating St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland
  - It falls during Lent and can lift the rules of abstinence for that day
  - Wearing the green means wearing the talisman green 4-leaf clover, a symbol of good luck
- Sunday: Instituted by the Catholic Church
  - Sunday is the day of the Sun, Egypt tradition
  - Solis, German Sonntag god, became the European (Teutonic) name for Sunday
  - Jesus and apostles/early church kept Saturday
  - The Scribes and Pharisees added 39 Major laws to the Sabbath that Jesus did not keep
  - The Apostles in the book of Acts kept Saturday as their Sabbath
  - The Lord’s Day in the book of Revelation makes no reference to the day but Saturday had been called the Lord’s Day for centuries
  - In 130 AD Barnabas of Alexandria said the present Sabbaths were unacceptable to God and that the 8<sup>th</sup> day was the beginning of another world – should be kept with joyfulness (The Epistle of Barnabas, chap. 15, in ANF, Vol. I, pp. 146, 147)

- In 150 AD Justin Martyr in Rome says, “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Next follow prayer, communion, and an offering for the poor.” (Apology I, chap. 67, in ANF, Vol. I, p. 186)
- Trajan had outlawed Sabbath keeping while Hadrian later expelled all Jews from Palestine (132-135 AD)
- Christians of Rome, feeling the imminent danger of growing anti-Semitism separated themselves from Jews with Sunday worship
- Sunday was instituted in 321 AD by Constantine to be the acceptable day of rest
- Thanksgiving: Instituted by the Government
  - Celebrated the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in November
  - Instituted in the United States in 1863
  - Originally a religious holiday to give thanks to God for helping the pilgrims survive the harsh winter
- Valentine’s Day: Pagan Festival later instituted by the Catholic Church
  - February 14 after Valentine martyred in Africa on this date and another Valentine buried in Via Flaminia on this date
  - Originally named after 2 Christian martyrs Valentine
  - 1847 was the first institution of mass produced Valentine’s cards
  - It is the year’s second largest card-sending holiday with 1 billion cards sent annually
  - Instituted in 496 AD as a romantic holiday
  - In Ancient Rome the festival of Lupercalia was observed from February 13-15 dedicated to chaste Juno
  - The ancient Athenian calendar celebrated the month of Gamelion (mid-January to mid-February) dedicated to the marriage between Zeus and Hera

We have lost our way by removing our Jewish roots. Christianity is more closely associated with the world than with true religion. Just as the Scribes and Pharisees added the Mishna and Gemara and certain auxiliary teachings to the Books of Moses and Prophets, Christianity has added traditions and ceremonies based in paganism to the sacred writings of the Old and New Testament. In fact, several times throughout Christian history, the writings of the Apostles were labeled heretical and vehemently disputed.

The roots we originated from are the roots that feed and nourish the vine. The Jews have cut off their Messiah and New Covenant because they did not understand the times and the season, or the fulfillment of the very Feasts they kept for thousands of years, just as Christians have cut off the Old Testament because we do not understand the importance of it to our fundamental faith. We have both erred, and we are both those branches left scattered and fallen from the vine, which is the fundamental life of Christ. We are both in error and unless we both become grafted into the true vine, we will wither and perish.

What does this mean?

There is no hope for any... denomination or Jew... that remains outside the fullness of Christ who encompasses both the Old and New Testament, both the Jewish and Christian teachings. We need to

clear our lives of the confusion of the holidays, of the ways of the pagan world, and truly become God's people, set apart. We can no longer mix our ways just because we live in this world.

I highly recommend the book, "The Messianic Church Arising," by Dr. Robert Heidler. He goes into great detail discussing how Rome and Alexandria, the forerunners of Anti-Semitism, brought in Greek philosophers and paganistic practices to replace the Jewish heritage they were rejecting.

I am in no way telling anyone what practices to observe. I can only speak from my heart. The Holy Spirit has been impressing on both Susan and I for the past while that we need to incorporate the lessons of the Feasts into our lives, to study the things that set apart the people of God. We need to be careful that Kingdom purpose is the motive, rather than self preservation, or advancement.

It is time to make a decision. That is the time we are in. It is never too early for repentance. Rather than wait for the Trumpet to blow calling us to a 10-day repentance, do it now. We can look at the things that have taken precedence in our lives, and begin to remove the worldly aspects from our beliefs, to put God back in our lives.

These are my declarations (and I have a friend who highlights these life-changing declarations and brings them up to me all the time!!):

- I am no longer entertaining pagan holidays
- I am going to learn about the Biblical Feasts and incorporate them into my life in true observance
- I am going to give to God from the first fruits of all that I have (tithes)
  - With the motive of "For the Kingdom" instead of "Self-preservation"
  - This means from my gross income as He is to receive from the first of what I receive
  - We have been given in order to give
- I am going to stay out of all debt
  - Debt is bondage and not of God
  - This includes living on a margin that allows for an emergency and being prepared for it
  - Living within a my means (I personally need to learn how to do this)
  - Save money
- I will set aside monies for offerings
  - Unlike tithes which are mandatory, offerings are not an obligation
  - I have robbed God not only in my tithes but in my offerings (Malachi)
  - Offerings are a sacrifice we choose to make
  - It must be free will and given with a willing heart
  - A freewill offering must also cost me something to give
- I will give alms
  - Alms are the giving of ourselves
  - Giving Alms is giving to the poor who cannot give in return
- I am going to separate myself from the world in a more definite way
  - Their policy of debt
  - Their policy of pagan ceremonies
  - I would like to separate myself from their entertainment, but I will need much prayer for this to be successful (Please remember me)

This will take time because I have to renew my mind, change the things that have been ingrained in me since birth. These weaknesses to pagan traditions are written into our DNA and these things need to be

broken on a deep level. How can I do this? Susan has taught me a very life-changing lesson. It takes a little step at a time. Each time I find myself falling into an area I do not want to go into, I simply declare, "I just don't want to go there." And I say this each time I find myself going where I do not want to go. I will not enter into condemnation for falling again, but I will pick myself up and begin again.

Success is not measured by how many times you fail, but by how times you pick yourself up.

God is there for me. He always has been. He has never changed His ways. My people came from Noah, as did all of yours. My people knew God at one time. But they have travelled the route of paganism into Christian paganism. It is now time to get back to the roots of our faith, the ANCIENT PATHS, and celebrate our faith as God intended.

I choose to return to my God in holiness and righteousness, not as man teaches, but as God teaches.

Father God, I repent of the way of my ancestors who left you time and time again because they chose to forget and then did not know who You are. Graft me into the vine in all ways. Lord, I will not shun what you and the Apostles have taught any longer. Father, make Your way a reality and revelation to me and forgive me for my lack of knowledge and understanding. Lord, lead me to learn about your observances. Father, forgive me generationally for my attack and persecution of my Jewish brothers who were supposed to be in the vine with me. Lord, call all Your people, Jew and Gentile alike and teach us the way in which we are supposed to walk. Father, teach me, reach me and raise me up to be the person I am supposed to be. Remove the veil of religiosity that has guided me and my family for generations. Tear it asunder and let me see the revelation of truth and reality, the revelation of You and Your life. In Jesus' precious and most holy name, the vine of life and liberty, amen.

God bless you all  
Jessica and Susan