

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #9

Christian Feast of Unleavened Bread

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Welcome to another Lord of the Sabbath Program!

Last week, we reviewed the commanded seven annual holy day convocations of the LORD. They were given by God to Moses for Israel to proclaim and keep FOREVER. These annual holy day convocations are in addition to those on each weekly Sabbath day.

I believe that God intended, from the time of creation itself, that ALL His holy days would one day be observed by ALL His people. This may be a new teaching to you. I can say, with some embarrassment, that it was once a new teaching to me as well. Now, my old ways of worship seem so silly to me.

But, praise God, I grew in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord. And, I came to realize that Jesus is that Savior and He, by His own mouth, said He was Lord of the Sabbath. He said so for a reason. I was pretty slow to understand what that reason was.

I know, from the Bible, what Jesus said and DID about the worship of God. Once I understood this, what choice did I have except to change my ways of worship to His ways, and God's ways. What seemed strange at first, became a blessing that I probably can't adequately describe in words. It became clear that, as the Bible claims, God's thoughts and ways ARE NOT man's thoughts and ways; and God's ways ARE better!

The commanded holy convocations are the days of each year set apart as holy by God (for only God can make something holy). Customary work is NOT to be done on His holy days. Group worship, however IS commanded on His holy days. Our awesome Creator God has the authority to command this worship from His creatures.

Isn't ignoring the LORD'S commands disobedience? Isn't making your own laws and customs for worship contrary to His laws something to be aware of and avoid? Disobedience is a slap in the face of a holy God. It is prideful and disrespectful. It is like all sin before a holy God. And, willful sin will keep us out of the Kingdom of God.

When I learned what God has commanded of His people for group worship, and looked at my own customs, my sin and disobedience became red as scarlet. I had to repent and change what I said, what I thought and what I did about my worship of God. I had to wash away my sinful ways with the blood of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. Not doing so could put at risk my eternal life with God. So, I humbly share with you today what I believe the Holy Spirit has revealed to me. I hope and pray it also helps you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, and that keeping the LORD'S holy days blesses you, as it has me.

Unfortunately, neither Jews, nor most Christians, keep God's commanded holy days at this time in God's plan for mankind. Why would either of these supposedly God-fearing groups of people not obey our Almighty Creator and LORD, the God of Abraham, in how to worship their Creator?

Well, Jews today are prevented from observing the Torah for worship. They can't worship God as commanded because the visible presence of God is no longer in Jerusalem where the annual feasts of the LORD needed to be observed before Him. He is no longer present in the Temple of God; in fact, there is no Temple at all! Jews can still keep the weekly Sabbath day holy. But, like the Pharisees of Jesus time, they have unfortunately added customs and practices not in the Torah to its observance.

We have Jews today, in various sects of Judaism, who follow their rabbis teachings rather than the Torah of God. They add to and take away from the Torah, the written word of the God of Abraham given to Moses for His chosen nation and people Israel.

It was that way already at the time our Savior lived as a man on this earth. Jesus' criticism of the scribes and the Pharisees was poignant. We find the criticism of them in several gospels. But, the account in Matt. 23, where Jesus repeatedly declares woe unto the scribes and Pharisees of His day, is simply heart wrenching. Read Christ's words in Matt. 23: 1-8, and you will gain insight into why the Jewish religious leaders so hated Jesus and called for His crucifixion:

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' But you do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

Two important points are clear about the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus acknowledges that they sit in Moses' seat. That means Jesus accepted their authority to copy the ancient scrolls and teach the Law of Moses from them to the people. A better translation of the Hebrew texts of Matthew's gospel makes it clear that it is what Moses taught which was given to him by God Himself that the people were to observe and do. When the Pharisees read the words of Moses from the scrolls every Sabbath they spoke correctly with the authority of God. But unfortunately their works did not match their speech and their hearts were not right before God. You might say they gave an appearance to men of being religious, but they were not righteous in God's eyes.

And, can you accept the words of Jesus about titles and exalted positions in the world, and EVEN in the congregation of believers? Jesus said beware of such men who claim to

be religious and who claim to be teachers of the word of God, but who contradict Moses. They will insist on the best seats in the synagogues and at the FEASTS. This is referring to the feasts of the Lord which they already had begun to distort and make them the feasts of the Jews instead of the feasts of the LORD as given to Moses.

And, Jesus also made it very clear that such men worshipped God in vain for their hearts were not with God and indeed far from Him. They also kept the traditions of their male “elders” as commandments, instead of the commandments of God in the Law of Moses. We find the powerful words of Jesus in Mark 7: 6-8, answering the Pharisees after they accused His disciples of not walking in the tradition of the elders and washing their hands before eating bread:

He answered and said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God you hold the tradition of men---the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.”

I proclaim to you by the power of the powerful and scathing words of our Savior and Lord to also BEWARE of hypocritical religious leaders of today who keep the traditions of men instead of the Law of God which was given to Moses.

There are many groups of Jews who have come to believe in Jesus as their Messiah. But, having spent a lifetime of practicing Judaism according to the teachings of the rabbis through the centuries and even millenniums, it is difficult to abandon those customs. So they continue to keep their Jewish traditions even if they are not found in the words of Moses or as explained by Jesus. Beware, therefore, if you count yourself as a Messianic Jew. Do not be a hypocrite and worship God in vain. You must follow the one true rabbi and teacher, the Lord Jesus, in the worship of God, who is both His AND our Father.

But, what about us Christians? Temple worship before God in Jerusalem was not commanded for them by Jesus, or by the Apostle Paul. Fortunately, someone more glorious than Moses, and the Temple, is available to us. In Heb. 3: 3 we read:

Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

And, in Matt. 12: 6, we read how Jesus answered the Pharisees who had criticized His disciples for unlawfully shucking and eating field grain on the Sabbath when they were hungry. Jesus pointed out to them how the priests also profaned the Sabbath in the temple but were blameless. And, concerning the temple, which was holy having the presence of God in it, and the focus of worship for the annual holy days in Jerusalem and in the Temple, Jesus told them:

Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.

Praise God! We Christians have that One: Jesus, to define the worship that is pleasing to God, His Father, and our Father. If Jesus, the Son of God, does not know where and how to worship God, who does? Jesus is more glorious and greater than Moses and the Temple where certain aspects of worship pleasing to God were to take place according to the Law of Moses.

However, with the first coming of Jesus, the worship commanded for Israel in the Torah changed. Jesus Himself said so. Are you willing to listen? Are you willing to follow Jesus in His way to worship God? Are you willing to worship in the ways His hand-picked Apostles taught and did even AFTER Jesus had ascended to heaven? Then, I pray that you will listen to the Voice of our Great and Good Shepherd, Jesus, and not follow the ways of men.

Jesus explained the most important change about worship of the Father that was coming to a Samaritan woman who met Him at a well in Samaria. She was not worshipping as the Jews but as her fathers had. She had no idea of how the disciples of Jesus should and would worship in the future. She had had five husbands and was living with a sixth man not her husband. Jesus made sure the account was recorded for our benefit. Let us read His revealed Truth to her and to us in John 4: 19-26:

The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

Wow! There are people who are not sure who this Jesus was? Some doubt He was God in the flesh, the anointed One of God, the promised Messiah of Israel. Some doubt if He was even a prophet? Some doubt he was anything more than a good man and an effective teacher. Well, if you believe your Bible, Jesus claimed that he was the promised Messiah of Israel, the Christ. He said it. I hope you believe it!

But, what did this Jesus, the Christ, tell us about the proper worship of His Father? First, Jesus confirmed that it was indeed the Jews who went to Jerusalem to worship who were the ones who knew WHAT they worshipped. He confirmed that salvation was of the JEWS. Can you have any doubt that the Jewish worshippers that Jesus referred to, were those who went to Jerusalem to worship at the three pilgrim feasts of the LORD? Is there

any doubt in your mind that Jesus ALWAYS kept these feasts of the LORD Himself? Is there any saying of Jesus that a time was coming when His disciples would no longer keep these feasts of the LORD; the weekly and annual holy days of God? No, Jesus did His Father's will in all respects. Jesus DID NOT come to introduce new holy days of worship.

In fact, His own Apostles and disciples continued to keep all these feasts of the LORD for decades AFTER Jesus died, was resurrected and rose into heaven to be with our Father. Jesus, in fact, was the first of the firstfruits of God's harvest to do so. We will cover that in detail in a future program dealing with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

But, it is vital to understand that with the advent of Jesus, the Messiah, the feasts would take on new meanings. And, they would be observed differently. It is in this way that I keep the feasts of the LORD today. It is NOT the way the Jews of today keep them. And not the way most Christians today keep their holy days either. The Feasts of the LORD were not abolished with the coming of Jesus; they were changed and magnified spiritually.

Now, Jesus knew that that kind of pleasing worship of the Father given to Moses for Israel was coming to an end. Jesus knew that the Mosaic commanded offerings of slain goats and bulls at the Temple for His holy days would be coming to an end. Jesus knew that the Levitical priesthood would be ending. Jesus even knew that the Temple itself would be left desolate of God's presence, and would be entirely cast down to the last stone, and be destroyed. That is still its condition to this very day.

Don't believe this because I said so! And, don't do what I do to worship God to please me. Believe what God, Jesus and the Apostles say about God's holy days for group worship and keep them in order to please God with your worship. His words are Truth.

God has appointed these convocations to be before Him. His specific appointments are to be proclaimed. I proclaimed them last week straight from the word of God. God gave specific days, of the week and of the year, when the people of God are to STOP their customary work and worship the LORD. They are glorious days to keep holy. They have entirely changed my group worship; and my life for the better. That is why I want to tell you about them! You can try them and decide for yourself whether God's ways are indeed better than man's ways for yourself and your walk with God.

I was really confused and deceived about what group worship pleased God. I was taught the traditions of men. I went to a Church on most Sundays. I celebrated the proclaimed "Christian" holy days such as Easter and Christmas and even Halloween (All Saints Day) most of my life. I have seen them deteriorate in our society to become secular "holidays" of men rather than holy days of the LORD.

So, we see the Christian Churches, and their leaders pleading that we need to put Christ back into "Christmas" and His resurrection back into "Easter." Something seems to have gone wrong with these holidays. What I pray and plead is that we all recognize what the

holy days of the LORD are, and keep them; not these vain holidays of men. Why? Mainly because the LORD'S holy days are all about Jesus AND the plan of God for mankind.

I have already made the case for all men keeping the seventh-day Sabbath to the LORD. It was not a day made solely for Israel. And, Jesus declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath. Is it plausible that He would call Himself "Lord" of something that had been abolished, especially by His own coming as the Savior? And, going to Church on Sunday for a brief worship service, bears little resemblance to what I now do to worship God on the Sabbath. In my own life, I have felt the graceful blessing of the latter over the former.

Now, even accepting that the weekly Sabbath was made for all mankind and should be observed today, we must seriously ask ourselves about whether God intended His commanded annual feasts to be observed today even by those other than the people of Israel? Put bluntly, must a Gentile Christian observe the feasts of the LORD in this age to worship properly before God? I believe so, and here is why.

First, understand that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is inherently and intimately all about Jesus. This feast is also referred to as the Passover. Now, if you are a Christian, you must know how Jesus is called OUR Passover Lamb. Jesus was called the Lamb of God by John the Baptist. In Revelation, we see the resurrected and glorified Jesus in heaven as the Lamb of God. If you have trouble recognizing the relationship of Jesus to this first feast of the LORD, you might as well turn off your radio.

Jesus WAS NOT our "Easter" Lamb. Easter is NOT a Biblical holy day. It was created by men. The sooner you accept this fact and study the meaning of the Passover, the sooner the true worship of God will explode in your spiritual life. And, if the Feast of Unleavened Bread does not make much sense to you, perhaps it will that Jesus is the very "unleavened" bread of life that came down from heaven that, if you eat of it, gives you eternal life?

Have you heard about the firstfruits in God's harvest of souls? Are you aware that Jesus is the first of the firstfruits? Are you aware of the wave sheaf offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Are you aware of its meaning in Christ? If you choose to celebrate Easter, you are missing much of God's richness which He provided in His Feasts. I am sorry if that offends you, but I believe with all my heart that God intends for you to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread and not an Easter holiday.

Look carefully at what Jesus told His disciples at His last supper with them as recorded in Luke 22: 14-16:

When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

What was Jesus talking about? First, eating the Passover means to eat the Passover lamb. The Last Supper was on the night of Abib 14, the LORD'S day of the Passover. According to God's command to Israel, the Passover lamb was to be slain in the afternoon of Abib 14. Eating the Passover lamb would have taken place the next night at the start of the First Day of Unleavened Bread on the 15th day of the first month; the month of the Abib, or as called later, Nisan. A holy convocation is commanded for that day.

But, Jesus knew he would not be able to eat the Passover with them that year. For, His hour had come. At the ninth hour of that same day, at 3:00 PM on the 14th day of Abib, he would suffer and die on the cross of Calvary. Jesus died at the same time the Passover lambs were being slain at the temple in preparation for the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus gave His apostles a command that they would surely do the next night. For He told them to wash one another's feet as He had done unto them. And, to remember Him, for the unleavened bread they would share without Him was symbolic of His body, and the wine they would drink without Him was symbolic of His blood. What a glorious memorial of Jesus, our Savior and our Lord!

Jesus told them the next time he would eat the Passover would be with them in the Kingdom of God. That is when Christ will return to the earth, His second coming. And, when He does, He would finally celebrate the feast with His disciples once again. Will you be there to celebrate the feast with Him?

Long after Jesus had left this earth, the Apostle Paul was still remembering Jesus as his Passover Lamb and teaching these called-out Gentiles to keep the feast, but in a new and more humble way. This is what Paul said in 1 Cor. 5: 6-8:

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 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. 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.

Do not be deceived. Paul never taught the Gentiles to keep a holiday called Easter. He taught them to keep the feast. It was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Christ had become our Passover Lamb for this Feast of the LORD. We do not have to kill an innocent lamb at the Temple in Jerusalem to keep the feast. His body is the unleavened bread of the feast. We are to eat it humbly in remembrance of Him for seven days. Indeed, I will wash my brethren's feet, and eat His body to remember Him, as my Passover Lamb, and the eternal bread of life, during this upcoming Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Jesus made a statement in the synagogue in Capernaum while he taught that sends shivers up my spine each Feast of Unleavened Bread. We find them in John 6: 53-55:

Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

I suspect you grasp the basis here for what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about its “holy communion” wafer taken at a mass? I remember fondly when I celebrated my first Holy Communion sacrament. I was just a kid. I had never read the word of God. I had no idea about the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But, having grown in the knowledge of the Lord of the Sabbath, these religious things now seem to have been worship done in vain.

Hopefully, I have illuminated how the Feast of Unleavened Bread was BOTH about God and Israel under the old covenant AND about Jesus and His church body under the new covenant. These Feasts of the LORD have a dual meaning in terms of Jesus and the future Plan of God for all mankind.

If you want to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, and enhance your own group worship of God and His glory and majesty, I hope you will continue to tune in to this Lord of the Sabbath Program during the rest of the year. These Feasts of the LORD will change not only your way of worship, they will change your faith in God and the promises He gave to those who believe in His Son as the Messiah and His coming Kingdom on earth.

The clock on the wall says it is time to end this Program. But, with the remembrance of Christ’s resurrection drawing near this spring, it seems appropriate to investigate just how the apostle’s celebration of the “Passover” Feast of the LORD, was changed to a celebration of Easter Sunday.

We’ll start next week by looking at on what day of the week Jesus was crucified and died. If you were taught it was on Good Friday, it is time for you to get your Bible out and discover what it actually reveals. You don’t want to miss this program. Tell your friends about it. You will certainly grow in the knowledge of our Lord, Jesus, the Christ.

Until the next Sabbath day, may the grace and peace of God our Father, and Jesus our Lord, be with you.