

WERE THE FEASTS ABOLISHED BY THE MESSIAH’S DEATH?

by Craig Peters

- *Did the prophets of old keep the Feasts? Yes!*
- *Did the Messiah keep the Feasts? Yes!*
- *Are we to follow in the Savior’s footsteps? Yes!*
- *Did the first century apostles keep the Feasts? Yes!*
- *And did Sha’ul, the emissary to the Gentiles, teach those engrafted Gentiles to keep the Feasts? Yes!*
- *So should all New Covenant believers today keep the Feasts? Yes!*

“Keep and Teach” Equals Greatness

Many today assert the Feasts of יהוה were abolished. This is even the case among many denominations which correctly teach the Seventh Day Shabbat is still binding upon all New Covenant believers. Superficially, abolishing the Feasts via the Messiah’s death may seem to be a plausible argument, but upon closer examination, we see this view is merely a *theory*, and theories will not help us to obtain an entrance and a reward in the coming Kingdom of יהוה. When speaking to the multitudes, the Messiah taught His listeners that those who *keep and teach* the Torah commandments would be called “great” in the Kingdom of יהוה.¹ Considerable, clear evidence shows our Savior was most certainly including those ordinances which pertain to the Feast days, since they were declared to be “perpetual” and “age-abiding” by יהוה Himself.² Perhaps even more telling, in the days of ancient Israel, whenever a king was setting out to usher in a nationwide *revival*, what was *pivotal* to his restoration efforts? As an essential part of the revival, we read that men of faith were giving preeminence to the Feasts days which יהוה Himself had set apart for all Israel. In bringing about reformation, these men of faith upheld the Feasts which יהוה designated as *mandatory* days of Thanksgiving and worship! We will contemplate the work of those Israeli kings a bit later, but first, we proceed to an interesting and ironic question which was posed to the writer some years back.

Why Do You Keep Those “Old Testament” Feasts?

Coming from the particular one who was addressing me, it could not have been a more ironic question:

Why do you keep those “Old Testament” Feasts?

So why do we say his inquiry was ironic? Because the person who asked this question had celebrated Pentecost for many years, maybe even decades! The Greek word translated “Pentecost”—meaning “count fifty”—is a word which describes one of the “Old Testament” Feasts which this person was castigating me for observing!³ Here is a man who inquired why *we* are keeping the Feasts, when he himself actually advocates doing so, in some measure, although quite unwittingly! Hence, this man’s inquiry must be a really good one, since even he has never fully realized the amazing connection between the New Covenant and the immutable, prophetic Feasts of יהוה. And since it is such a good question, maybe we should ask the apostles!

“Just why were you apostles observing the Feasts, even after the Messiah had died, risen, and ascended into the heavens?”

While we cannot obtain a *direct answer* from these men of faith, we can look at their authoritative example in regard to this most important question: Here is a group of men who had walked with the Messiah for around three years, and not only had they witnessed *His observing the Feasts*,⁴ but they also kept the Feasts with Him! Then, following His resurrection, they saw יהושע on numerous occasions, over the space of forty days, as He taught them many things concerning the Kingdom of Elohim.⁵ Yet only ten days after His ascension, these very same men were gathered together (with all Israel) keeping the Feast of Weeks/Shavuot (Pentecost)!⁶ And the pouring out of the Set Apart Spirit on this *Feast Day* was an historical event of monumental proportions—clear evidence the Spirit of יהוה still very much recognized and observed the age-enduring importance of the Feast of Weeks, or Shavuot/Pentecost!

The Apostle Sha’ul and His Companion, Luke

Luke, the physician, traveled with Paul (Sha’ul), and he recorded many salient events in the life of this great apostle to the Gentiles. One of the important things Luke recorded was that Sha’ul kept the seven days of Unleavened Bread in Philippi.⁷ Since some erroneously claim that Feasts may only be kept in Israel, we further note that, being a city of Macedonia, *Philippi* was clearly outside of the Promised Land. And if the Feasts

³ “Pentecost” was really the **Feast of Weeks**, the feast which occurred 50 days after the Sabbath Day which fell within the Week of Passover. See Leviticus 23:10-21 and Deuteronomy 16:16.

⁴ John 5:1, 6:4, John 7:1-40, Luke 22:7-9

⁵ Acts 1:3

⁶ Acts 2:1-7

⁷ Acts 20:6

had really been abolished, then this New Covenant apostle simply had no business to still be keeping the seven days of Unleavened Bread! Yet not only did Sha’ul *keep* this *seven-day* Feast of Passover,⁸ he also taught the Gentile Corinthians to do likewise!⁹ Next, we briefly elaborate on the fact that Pesach/Passover is a seven-day feast, and not a one-night observance.

Is Pesach/Passover a Feast of One Day (One Night) or a Feast of Seven Days?

Some people who realize the Savior did not abolish the Law still imagine that, upon observing the night of Passover, they have fulfilled the righteousness of the Torah. But Sha’ul (writing to the Gentiles) was clear in stating that Passover was a full, seven-day Feast that all believers in the Messiah should keep:

*Cleanse out, therefore, the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even the Messiah, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us **keep the feast**, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

¹Corinthians 5:7-8

Based on the Torah, it is clear the Passover *commences* the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.¹⁰ Thus, through Ezekiel, יהוה calls *Passover* a “feast of seven days.”¹¹ Passover is a week-long feast during which Elohim intends His people to *continually commemorate* their great deliverance from Egypt. So Sha’ul was clear in stating that Passover was *a full, seven-day feast* that all believers in the Messiah must keep. Contrary to the imaginings of some sincere believers, Passover does not exclude Unleavened Bread, nor does Unleavened Bread exclude Passover.

Galatians 4:8-11:

A Prohibition Against Pagan Holidays

Not realizing these things, many people will take one glance at a text in *Galatians* and immediately deduce the Feasts of יהוה were not only abolished, but that Sha’ul was actually *rebuking* the Galatians for keeping these Festivals!

However, at that time, not knowing Elohim, you were in bondage to them that by nature are not deities. But now that you have come to know Elohim, or rather, to be known by Elohim, how turn you back again to the weak

⁸ Exodus **12**:11-20, **13**:6-7, **23**:15, **34**:18, Leviticus 23:6, Numbers 28:17, Deuteronomy 16:3-4

⁹ 1Corinthians 5:7-8

¹⁰ Exodus **12**:11-20, **13**:6, **23**:15, Luke 22:7

¹¹ Ezekiel 45:21

and beggarly rudiments, whereunto you desire to be in bondage over again? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. Galatians 4:8-11

But how can one claim this text *abolishes* the Feasts of יהוה when Sha’ul elsewhere wrote to the Gentiles to keep the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread? Since Scripture does not contradict Scripture, it is absurd to deduce this text negates the Feasts of יהוה. And the *context* of Sha’ul’s words to the Galatians shows he was speaking of the time when these Gentiles *did not know Elohim*, the time when they were *unconverted* and had no knowledge of the Messiah or the Kingdom of יהוה. And in keeping with the Torah, the *context* shows Sha’ul was rebuking these believers for their *return* to the *idolatry* of the *pagan observances* which they had embraced *before* knowing the true Elohim of Israel. In the days of old, יהוה Himself had forbidden Israel to permit “observers of times”—promoters of pagan idolatry and astrological prognostications.¹² And Sha’ul sternly warned: Should the Galatians *return to anti-Torah paganism*—observing demonically inspired pagan holidays that were *not* established by יהוה—their idolatry, sorcery, and witchcraft would disqualify them from inheriting the Kingdom of Elohim!¹³ As a result, these ongoing *deeds of the flesh* would *nullify* the emissary’s ministry in their lives, and his labors over them would have been rendered in vain.¹⁴ Contrary to popular, but erroneous notions, nothing in the letter of *Galatians* abolishes the perpetual Feasts of יהוה in any way.

Colossians 2:16-17: Additional Proof the First Gentile Converts Kept the Feasts of יהוה

The assembly at Colossae was largely composed of Gentiles.¹⁵ Since Sha’ul had already instructed the *Corinthians* to keep the Feast of Passover, how are we to understand his words to the Colossians? For he gives them a most interesting directive near the center of his letter:

Therefore, let no one judge you in regard to eating or drinking, or in regard to a Feast, a New Moon celebration, or a Shabbat Day. These are a shadow of the things that are to come, but the body is the Messiah’s.

Colossians 2:16-17

¹² See the KJV for the following Scriptures: Leviticus 19:26, Deuteronomy 18:10-12,14, 2Kings 21:6, 2Chronicles 33:6

¹³ Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁴ Galatians 4:11, 5:21

¹⁵ Colossians 1:27

¹ Matthew 5:17-20

² Exodus **12**:14-15, **31**:13,16, Leviticus **16**:29,31, **23**:14,21,31,41

But why would someone have been *judging* these Gentile converts about the observance of Feasts, New Moons, or the Seventh Day Shabbat? And *who* was judging them? To understand Sha’ul’s words in Colossians 2:16-17, we will first review another occasion upon which followers of the Messiah were being *judged* in regard to the *manner* in which they were *upholding* the Appointed Times of יהוה set forth in the Torah. We see the very same thing occurring when the Messiah’s very first followers were walking through some grain fields on the Shabbat.¹⁶ Seeing them in the process of plucking ears for nothing more than a *morning breakfast*, the Jewish lawyers began *judging* these men;¹⁷ they attempted to rebuke the apostles as to *how* they were observing the Shabbat:

... “Behold, Your disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the Shabbat.”
Matthew 12:5

Because the disciples were *required* to observe Shabbat, the Pharisees felt compelled to *judge* the manner in which they kept this Day! But the Pharisees’ words of false judgment express the very spirit against which Sha’ul *warned* the Colossians: they must not subject themselves to the precepts and doctrines of *mere men*, who say things like:

“Handle not, taste not, touch not.”
Colossians 2:21

Like those men in the grain fields on the Shabbat, the Colossians were living under the Messiah’s *Headship*:¹⁸ they were subject to His Rule, His Leadership, His Guidance! And so, *mere men* who are *contradicting the Torah* had/*have no say* in the matter!¹⁹ Just as the Pharisees had *no jurisdiction* over the disciples (walking under the Messiah’s Headship), unconverted Jews in Colossae had *no authority* over these Messianic Gentile believers. So we see the text in question actually *proves* the Sabbaths, Feasts, and New Moons are part of the New Covenant! Having heard the truth of the Good News, these former Gentile pagans had learned from the Torah,²⁰ and they were now *observing the perpetual Feasts of יהוה* spoken of in His Word! All evidence indicates these Colossians were being confronted by *men* who were judging *how* they *observed* these perpetual ordinances! The *context* indicates those doing this

¹⁶ Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28

¹⁷ Matthew 12:2, Mark 2:24, Colossians 2:16

¹⁸ Matthew 12:5-8, Mark 2:27-28, Colossians 2:10,19

¹⁹ Colossians 2:16

²⁰ Acts 15:19-21

judging were Jews who did not believe in the Messiah, and who were still steeped in *traditions of men*, the *Torah-nullifying* traditions of Judaism!²¹ So while most people immediately dismiss the validity of the Feasts based on Colossians 2:16-17, this revealing text actually *proves* Gentile converts to the True Faith kept the Seventh Day Shabbat, along with all the other Feasts of יהוה!²² And it was because they were *actively observing these things*, that they had become the *target* of unconverted Jews—men who subsequently *judged* the Colossians as to *how* they were upholding the perpetual Feasts of the Most High, Festivals which had been commanded to *1000 generations*.²³

Who Wants Revival?

Revival will always escape those who negate the Word/Spirit of יהוה. We pray readers will see their negating of the Feasts does that very thing. When the kings of old set forth decrees to bring about reform and revival in Israel, Feast observance was at the core of their efforts. King Hezekiah reestablished the *service* Israel rendered to יהוה through true Feast observance,²⁴ and he warned the people not to be proud and stiff-necked by opposing the decree.²⁵ Later, King Josiah also set forth Feast observance as a major element of reformation.²⁶ In like manner, upon returning from Babylon, Nehemiah warned the great wrath of יהוה had beset Israel because they had profaned the Seventh Day.²⁷ And as he set in place decrees to keep the Shabbat set apart, Nehemiah sternly warned: Further sin against יהוה in this regard would bring *yet more wrath* upon the nation.²⁸ Believers today must also realize: יהוה has never changed His moral standards regarding the Seventh Day.²⁹

What are the Feasts?

• The Feasts of יהוה are times of commanded *Thanksgiving*,³⁰ and failure to “*serve יהוה with gladness*”³¹ during these Appointed Festivals is regarded by the

²¹ Galatians 1:14, Colossians 2:20-23, Matthew 15:3,9, Mark 7:7,9,13

²² Leviticus 23:1-44, Deuteronomy 16:1-17, Isaiah 66:22-24, Zechariah 14:9,16-19

²³ Deuteronomy 7:9, Psalm 105:8. *One thousand generations* is an immense, prophesied, and predetermined time-span which will range anywhere from 40,000 to 100,000 plus years!

²⁴ 2Chronicles 30:1-4

²⁵ 2Chronicles 30:5-9

²⁶ 2Chronicles 35:1-4

²⁷ Nehemiah 13:15-18 (See Jeremiah 17:19-27)

²⁸ Nehemiah 13:18-22

²⁹ Malachi 3:6

³⁰ Leviticus 23:40, Deuteronomy 12:17-18, 16:11-15

³¹ Psalm 100:2, Deuteronomy 28:47-48

Creator as *ingratitude* of the worst order: Israel’s failure to worship יהוה with a thankful, rejoicing heart was the very thing that led to their times of terrible punishment and captivity.³² Simply put, *the true Thanksgiving* is far longer than one day, and in the timetable of the Most High, it occurs far more than just once a year.

• The Feasts of יהוה are times of spiritual “retreat” and rejuvenation. They are the times to “come out”³³ and be separate from the world;³⁴ they are times to serve our Creator with praise, worship, and great rejoicing.³⁵ Particulars as to how we are to observe the Feasts need not hinder us from getting started: While spiritual retreats are common within many denominations, those who partake in such events are *depriving themselves* since the Spirit calls us away³⁶ far more than once a year and since two of the major observances—Passover and Tabernacles—are designated to last seven and eight days, respectively. In Psalm 23, David wrote the now-famous passage that indicates יהוה makes His sheep to lie down in green pastures and leads them beside the still waters. The great peace and rest to which David referred cannot be fully known, or experienced, until one keeps the Feasts of יהוה in company with loving, dedicated believers who are seeking Him with their whole hearts. So the Feasts of יהוה are times of wholesome rest and refreshing, given to us by the Father, and not to be rejected.³⁷

• The Feasts of יהוה remain prophetic of nearly all of the significant events that *have occurred*, as well as all of those significant events which will *yet occur* in His Prophetic Timetable. In keeping the Feasts of יהוה, we are walking in closer step with His mindset, and He will reveal to us those things which are yet to come.³⁸ We are also regarding “the works of [His] hands”³⁹ in a most significant way since Elohim ordained the Sun, Moon, and stars for seasons/moedim/feasts from the very beginning.⁴⁰

Closing Thoughts

All the prophets—including the Messiah and His apostles—kept the Feasts of יהוה, and all New Covenant believers were taught to uphold these Torah-

³² Deuteronomy 28:47-68

³³ 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1

³⁴ Ezra 6:21-22

³⁵ Nehemiah 8:2,10-14

³⁶ Isaiah 63:14

³⁷ Isaiah 28:12, 30:15, Jeremiah 6:16

³⁸ Amos 3:7, John 16:13

³⁹ Psalm 92:4-5, Revelation 14:6-7 (contrast this with Psalm 28:5)

⁴⁰ Genesis 1:14

ordained Festivals.⁴¹ It is not puzzling that certain denominations can zero in on a few scant Scriptures which mention the first day of the week, and then erroneously use those texts to justify upholding a pagan Sun-worship-day (which, as history shows, was actually set in place by the apostate Roman Catholic Church acting outside legitimate, Messianic authority)?⁴² Yet what do most of these same people do with the abundant, clear Scriptures which support observing the Feasts of יהוה, even in the New Covenant era? Well-meaning, but misguided people and leaders continue to derive unsubstantial, man-made doctrines to discredit the obedience which our Messiah requires over this all-important matter. Yet those who wish to “follow the Lamb wherever He goes,”⁴³ will surely want to follow the Example of יהושע in upholding the immutable Feasts of יהוה.

We have seen that not only did all the apostles uphold the Feasts of יהוה, but in keeping with the *testimony of יהושע*, even Gentile converts in the first century walked in these *prophetic ordinances*.⁴⁴ The King of Israel warns: those who adhere to the erroneous teachings of man will lose their crown of life;⁴⁵ they will fail to partake in the 1000-Year Millennium—the leading event of the Messianic Age: they will fail to partake in the First Resurrection and to obtain the Great Reward.

May יהוה pour out His Spirit upon all sincere believers in the Messiah so that many will embrace His present reformation/restoration—a revival that will see the Kingdom of Elohim (and His Feasts) established in all the earth!⁴⁶

C.P.

Northridge, CA
1st day of the 12th month

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⁴¹ *Shabbat*: Acts 1:12, 13:13-16, 42-44; 15:19-21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4. *Shavuot/Pentecost*: Acts 20:16, 1Corinthians 16:8. *Passover and Unleavened Bread*: 1Corinthians 5:7-8, Acts 20:6. *Yom Kippur*: Acts 27:9

⁴² See: <http://www.biblesabbath.org/confessions.html>

⁴³ Revelation 14:4

⁴⁴ Revelation 19:10

⁴⁵ Revelation 3:11

⁴⁶ Isaiah 2:1-4, 11:9, 66:22-24, Nahum 1:15, Zechariah 14:9,16-19