

The Lords Supper - Part VI

Keep the Passover *and* the Lord's Supper?

In this monthly teaching on the Lord's Supper we find that it is also necessary to address the observance of Passover as well due to the fact that more and more believers today are asking whether they should be keeping the Passover in addition to the Lord's Supper. This subject has become an issue recently because there are an increasing number of ministers that are teaching believers that they must keep more and more of the ordinances of the Old Testament Law (of which Passover is included) under the belief that God is restoring the Torah or the Law of Moses to the end-time Church. This teaching however can be proven and declared "false" based solely upon the Gospel of Christ.

In this article we want to expose the fallacies behind some specific teachings being taught by those who adhere to Old Testament days and laws under the age of grace. It will be proven, according to the Gospel of Christ, why believers should not be keeping Passover today and this based solely on what it symbolized or represented. You will learn the amazing truth of what the Passover actually pointed to and how it has been completely fulfilled in Christ and the reality of what it means to us today as his followers. You will also learn how focusing on the days, rules and regulations of the law can actually take you further away from Christ and the promises that have been given to us under the New Covenant.

In order for us to receive all that God wants us to as believers in Christ, it is imperative to know the differences between *Passover* and *the Lord's Supper*. Some believers have begun the observance of both the Old Testament Passover *and* the Lord's Supper however this has caused confusion among other members in the Body of Christ and rightfully so. This confusion arises out of the false teaching that Christians are under both the Old *and* New Covenants but again, this goes against the truth of the Gospel of Christ.

As was taught in last month's teaching on first fruits, confusion always results when others try to put the yoke of the law upon those that are called to live by God's grace. (Galatians 5:7-10 NIV) But God is not the author of confusion. (I Corinthians 14:33) Those that teach and practice works of the Mosaic Law or mix law and grace did not receive these things from the Gospel according to Christ. More and more are backsliding into the law although the New Testament epistles warn us not to.

Beware of the Deceiver

This is not a new thing however but simply a repackaging of a very old deception. Satan, the arch deceiver is at the root of all deception. Although God is not the author of confusion, the devil certainly is. He wants to keep God's people in confusion about the Gospel of Christ because it contains so much power. (Romans 1:16) He doesn't mind if believers go back under the yoke of the law, in fact he is complete agreement with this teaching. If believers go back under the bondage of the law, this means they will be falling farther and farther from grace. He knows that

this will also alienate them from Christ and cause his sacrifice to be of no value to their lives. (Galatians 5:2-4)

The devil knows what the Word of God says; he just doesn't live by it, but realize that he doesn't want you to live by it either! He knows that we are not able to serve two masters so if he can't drag us back into the world and sin, he doesn't mind if we are serving an empty, meaningless, *dead* religion that poses no real threat to his kingdom. His tactic is to appeal to the pride and flesh of believers and deceive them into thinking that they can *actually* keep the law when in reality what he really wants is to take them back into bondage and forfeit their freedom in Christ. We must not fall for this deception however, we must not be entangled in a yoke of bondage, but instead remain in Christ and live by the power of the Spirit.

You are not under Law but Grace

The teachings that the Lord gave to the Apostles for the Church (Acts-Revelation) clearly teach us that believers are not under the ordinances of the law but instead are under grace. (Romans 6:14) We find that the Apostle Paul and the writer of Hebrews warn of the dangers of reversion to the law once someone has been saved by grace and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 1:6-10, 2:14, 3:1-5, 10-14, 5:1-4, Hebrews 10) Since believers are not to go back to the works of the law, this would include keeping the feast of Passover. Now we are to keep what the Lord has commanded us instead under the New Covenant.

The Passover was clearly an observance or ordinance of the law that was given by God to the ancient Israelites under the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper or Communion was clearly given by God for the New Testament Church to observe. We also do not find that the Church was commanded to keep the Passover according to the law by the Lord and we do not find any scriptural examples of the Church observing it in this manner. (Exodus 23:14-15, Leviticus 23:4-6, Matthew 26:17-29, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-20, I Corinthians 11:23-32) The reasons for this will be made clear in the rest of this article.

Today there are some that believe that there is nothing wrong with keeping the Passover that was given in the law. Those that push Passover observance for the Church today may lead you to believe that it is a command of the Lord that has never ceased, that it is rich and rewarding in some way or that we may obtain the favor, protection and provision of the Lord by keeping it but again, scripture teaches us differently. To clear up the confusion and receive truth in this matter then, we must look to the Lord and his divinely inspired word. When we understand the symbolism behind both the Passover and the Lord's Supper, we will understand why Jesus did not command the Church to observe the Passover but instead the Lord's Supper.

Exposing today's False Teaching about Passover

Those that teach believers that they should be keeping Passover today have become deceived through false teaching. This has happened because they were not rooted and grounded in grace but legalism. They lack revelatory insight from the Holy Spirit about the sacrifice of Christ and the ordinances of the New Covenant because they have been looking to the law instead of the Lord. (II Corinthians 3:14-16) Now that they have received this false teaching, they have went on to become ministers of the letter (of the law) instead of ministers of the Spirit. (II Corinthians 3:6) The epistles of the New Testament teach us that we cannot receive justification or the blessings and favor of God through works of the law however; they can only be received by grace and faith in Christ and his finished work on the cross. (Galatians 3:6-18)

We can't receive what we don't have knowledge of. This is why we are admonished to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." We will only find fullness of revelation knowledge then by looking to Christ.

"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

The law does not reveal grace and truth to us, only Jesus does. We learn through the New Testament scriptures that the law blinds us and prevents us from seeing or knowing the fullness of the revelation of Christ. Those who adhere to the law under the dispensation of the New Covenant have a veil over their minds.

"Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (II Corinthians 3:15-16)

Yes, and even to this day, those that are looking constantly to the law by reading, teaching and practicing it cannot receive revelation knowledge of Christ and the New Covenant because they have become spiritually blinded. Many in the Church today do not realize that the law, when constantly read and adhered to, will cause spiritual blindness. Why? It is because the law *conceals* or covers true revelation and the divine mysteries of God but Christ *reveals* or uncovers these truths to us when we look to him. God does not want us looking to the law but instead to his Son.

If we want grace and truth from God then, we must look to Jesus for he is both. The Father has put everything that he has in his Son. It is written:

"For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him and through him to reconcile to himself all things..." (Colossians 1:19)

Please understand my friend that God does not reconcile all things to himself (most importantly people) through the law, but only through his Son Jesus Christ. No one could ever keep the law as a means to be reconciled, justified or find favor with God because all have sinned and fell short of the glory of God. We are only reconciled to God through the body and blood of Christ by faith and unmerited grace. (Ephesians 2:4-10)

We cannot fall for the message of those that teach that we must keep works of the law in order to receive the blessings of God either. Our blessings cannot be received through works of the law because under the New Covenant, they can only be received by grace and faith in Christ and what he has already accomplished for us through his sacrificial atonement. (Romans chapter 4, Galatians 2: 14-21, Galatians chapters 3, 4 and 5, Colossians 2:16-23) With that said, let's go on to other teachings that people use to try and justify Passover observance for the New Testament Church.

The Passover- An Everlasting Ordinance?

Some ministers claim that the old law was never done away with and that the Feast days of the law (including Passover) are an everlasting ordinance. They teach you that this means that these Old Testament festivals still apply to us as believers today but what does Christ and his Gospel say regarding these things? Those that teach this do not understand what the Lord's sacrifice has truly accomplished. Yes, God gave the Passover to the people of Israel as an ordinance *throughout their generations* but only until their Messiah (Christ) could come and bring fulfillment to this day. (Galatians 3:19-25, 4:8-11, Colossians 2:13-17)

Yes, the law was holy, righteous and good but no man could fulfill its requirements, only Jesus could do this for us. Yes, the law was temporarily imposed until Christ came but now that he has come it is defined as *legalism* for those who go back and try to keep what he has already brought fulfillment to. (Galatians 4:8-11) Since Jesus was the only one that fulfilled all the law, only he could remove it out of the way (cancel, abolish it). The purpose for the law had come to an end and was no longer needed now that Christ had brought the realities under the New Covenant. (Matthew 5:17, Ephesians 2:14-15, Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 10:9, Romans 10:4)

This would include the Passover. In the following paragraphs below, you will find why the Old Covenant Passover was instituted, what it pointed to and how it has been fulfilled completely by the Lord Jesus Christ. Please note the importance of the symbolism of both the Passover and the Lord's Supper. When we understand the substance behind the symbolism, we will understand why Passover observance is not for the Church today.

1. The Old Testament Passover symbolized and pointed to the **FIRST COMING of Christ as the Passover Lamb.** On the night of the Passover, the Israelites were to shed the blood of a lamb, spread the blood on their doorposts and then eat the entire roasted lamb along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. These all pointed to the first coming of Christ. Jesus became the real Passover Lamb when he died upon the cross and so brought the literal fulfillment to what this day pointed to. (Read Exodus 12:13-14, I Corinthians 5:7-8)

Now that Christ has been sacrificed as the Lamb, the Feast of Passover no longer is to be observed simply because its purpose has been completely fulfilled. To continue to observe the Feast of Passover according to the law would be denying and dishonoring the first coming of Christ and his atonement through the cross. Because of what Passover symbolized, to keep it today would be making a statement that we are still looking for a Lamb to come instead of a Lamb that has already come.

2. God only commanded the Nation of Israel, *throughout their generations*, to observe the Passover under the Law of Moses and only until the coming of the Messiah. (Lamb of God) The observance of Passover was not given to the New Testament Church to observe because its purpose and the entire Mosaic Law has been fulfilled in Christ. Now that this feast day has been fulfilled, the purpose for its observance is no longer necessary and has been abolished in Christ. (Ephesians 2:14-15, Colossians 2:16-17, Hebrews 9:8-10, 10:1) All men have been released from the works of the law and are now under grace. (Romans 7:6, 6:14)

3. When Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples in *Luke 22:16-20*, this became the last or final Passover, because He was going to the cross to fulfill what this day symbolized. The commonly known statements such as *the last Passover or last supper* signified that the law was coming to an end. Because Jesus fulfilled all the law, only he could bring an end to it. (Romans 10:4) During this last Passover that Jesus had with his disciples, he instituted new symbols for a New Covenant that he would usher in because he was getting ready to sacrifice his body and shed his blood on the cross for the remission of sins.

Those of us who have accepted his sacrifice observe the Lord's Supper by taking the bread and the wine or juice in remembrance of his sacrificial atonement until he comes again a second time. The Old Covenant (which includes Passover) was taken away so that the Lord's Supper could be instituted. We do not eat the flesh of an earthly lamb but now we partake of the real Lamb of God that has come down out of heaven. (Exodus 12, Luke 22:16-20, John 6:47-58)

4. The Communion or Lord's Supper that the Church is commanded to observe points to the SECOND COMING of Christ. It is important for New Testament Christians to understand the reasons the Lord instituted this supper. When we partake of the bread and wine that symbolizes his broken body and blood it is a constant reminder of his sacrificial atonement that he gave on our behalf. Christians observing the Lord's Supper are in *communion* with Christ and His Body, the Church, since the Lord's Supper is commonly practiced among a body of believers. By this observance we are showing that *we have already received Him as our Passover Lamb* that has saved us from our sins and given us eternal life.

When we keep the Lord's Supper we are making a powerful statement. The Apostle Paul explained, **"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup (Observe the Lord's Supper), you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."** (*1 Corinthians 11:26*) The Church proclaims that Jesus Christ, the Savior, *has already come* and *is* the Lamb slain for the sins of the whole world. (*Revelation 1:8*) We preach Jesus Christ and him crucified. The Church is preaching this message in obedience to the Lord's command. We are proclaiming his death (the atonement on the cross), burial and resurrection and that salvation and forgiveness of sins are available through him for all those who will receive him until his second coming as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. (*Mark 16:15-16, John 1:29, Matthew 26:28, Acts 2:38, Hebrews 9:22*)

In summary, the Passover observance of the Old Covenant symbolized a Lamb that *was to come* to be slain for the sins of the world. The Lord's Supper that we observe in the New Covenant symbolizes the Lamb *that has come* and who has shed His blood nearly 2000 years ago. We are no longer looking towards the Lord's first coming-that has already happened. We are however, looking towards his Second Coming. We have received the Lamb, now we are looking for the Lion who is coming back as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. This is why the Church does not keep Passover but instead keeps the Lord's Supper. Now we are looking for him to return again. This powerful truth is foundational to know in order to go on to receive those things that Christ has already obtained for us through the cross.

We in the Church cannot keep the Old Testament observance of Passover simply because of what it symbolized. Jesus became the last and final Passover Lamb to die and this means there is no more sacrifice for sin now. (*Hebrews 10:1-14*) Since this is so, why should we bring back an observance that he has put an end to? Now we should obey him by keeping the Lord's Supper.

Did Paul and the Early Church Keep Passover?

Those that teach believers in the Church today that they must keep the Passover and other Jewish festivals say that Paul, the other apostles and the Church in the first century kept these days, but did they really? We will not find that Paul or any other apostles taught believers to observe the Passover (according to the law) in the epistles to the Church. Why? It is because they understood that these days had been fulfilled in Christ. They understood that all believers were no longer under the dominion of the law once they came to the Lord. Instead they were to live out the reality that Christ had brought under the dispensation of a New and better Covenant. If we truly believe that these men wrote these epistles under divine inspiration of the Spirit, we will also receive it as truth from God.

Paul wrote specifically concerning the Hebrew Festivals as being fulfilled in Christ. He also taught that if one were keeping these days (according to the law) then they did not truly understand the realities of Christ and the New Covenant. In Galatians 4:10, Paul made it clear to the Galatians that were observing Jewish days that they were turning aside from the truth of the Gospel of Christ that he had originally given them. (*Galatians 1:6-10, 3:1-5, 4:21*) Paul wrote:

“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 all my efforts on you.” (Galatians 4:9-11)

These days, months, times and years that Paul mentions are directly related to the Jewish festivals of the law. Paul associates the works and days of the law in a negative sense as slavery or bondage in the book of Galatians. He also associates the New Covenant in Christ with true freedom. (Galatians 5:1)

In Galatians 4:9-11, *Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines these **days** as *Sabbaths*- A 24 hour period between sunrise and sunset, **months** as *New Moons*- as the first day of each month, when the new moon appeared, was a festival among the Hebrews (Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 28:11), **times** as stated *Seasons* of the year solemnly kept by the Jews, and comprising several days, as the PASSOVER, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles (II Chronicles 8:13) and **years** as the Jewish years of *Jubilee*.

We find that the Galatians were not the only ones that had also been pressured to keep the Mosaic Law under the New Covenant however. We also learn in the book of Colossians that some believers there were being judged for not observing these days by other law keeping adherents in the Church. What advice did Paul give them?

“So don't let anyone criticize you for what you eat and drink, or for NOT celebrating Jewish holidays and feasts or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these were only temporary rules that ended when Christ came. They were only shadows of the real thing- of Christ himself.” (Colossians 2:16-17 The Living Translation, emphasis mine)

Some Colossian brethren were criticized by their brethren for not keeping the Jewish feasts. Paul advised them to not receive this criticism but instead to live in the reality that had now come in Christ. In other words, those Jewish feasts were not the real deal, they merely pointed to Christ and the New Covenant. Since Paul specifically taught the Colossians that the Jewish days were only shadows and not the realities themselves and discouraged the Galatians from returning to them then he could not have possibly been teaching the Church to keep these days either. To the contrary of what some believe Paul was not promoting the observance of the Jewish festivals to the Church under the New Covenant.

Some today also teach that Paul kept the Jewish Festivals personally. They assume this because they read in the New Testament that Paul needed to be a certain place by a particular Feast Day or because he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Does this mean that Paul did these things because he was an observer of the law however? The answer is a resounding no! Instead, we will find that the only reason that Paul traveled according to these times and seasons were *to spread the Gospel of Christ to the Jewish people*.

The real purpose for Paul going into the synagogue on the Jewish Sabbath or being in a certain city during the Jewish Festivals was not to be obedient to the Law of Moses, but because this was where he could reach the most concentrated number of the Jewish people with the Gospel of Christ! (The Israelites were commanded to go into the synagogues on the Sabbath Day and to also observe the Jewish Festivals according to the law.)

It can be proven that Paul did not observe these days according to the law by virtue of the message he preached and by all the epistles he wrote. If Paul, had in fact, preached adherence to the law (which included the feast days), he would have been opposing the very Gospel he preached. We

will find that Paul did not teach or practice adherence to the law however. If he would have, then he would have been a hypocrite. In fact, he would've had no right to rebuke the Apostle Peter for the very thing that he would have been guilty of himself. (Galatians 1:6-10, 2:11-21)

What about I Corinthians 5:7-8?

Some believe that Paul kept the Passover and was teaching the Church to as well because of this passage of scripture. However, here we find that Paul is not referring to the observance of the Passover as kept in the law (which was only a shadow of what was to come), but was teaching the Corinthians about the reality of what this day actually *had become* under the New Covenant in Christ. This passage must be understood in its true context. When the entire chapter is read we will find that the believers in the Corinthian Church were allowing sexual immorality to go unchecked within their congregation. They were not dealing with the issue of ongoing, unrepentant sin in their midst. When we look at this passage in this light we can understand Paul's words with greater clarity. He wrote:

“Your flip and callous arrogance in these things bothers me. You pass it off as a small thing, but it’s anything but that. Yeast, too, is a “small thing,” but it works its way through a whole batch of bread dough pretty fast. So get rid of this “yeast.” Our true identity is flat and plain, not puffed up with the wrong kind of ingredient. *The Messiah, our Passover Lamb, has already been sacrificed for the Passover meal, and we are the Unraised Bread part of the Feast. So let’s live out our part in the Feast, not as raised bread swollen with the yeast of evil, but as flat bread-simple, genuine, unpretentious.*” (I Corinthians 5:7-8 the Message Bible, *emphasis mine*)

I like the way in which Paul brought out the reality of what the Old Testament Passover had actually become under the New Covenant. Our sinless Lord had already sacrificed himself upon the cross and taken the sins of these believers; in reality they had now become unleavened like Christ *even as we have become as well today*. Paul was reminding these believers of this fact and wanted them to live and act accordingly. He wanted them to live the holy, righteous life that they had been called to live in the Lord and forsake sin. He wanted them to no longer be sin conscience but righteous conscience. Clearly Paul was not keeping the old feast of Passover but living in a new and living way under the terms of a better covenant called *the New Covenant*.

Believers today should not be living in the shadows but instead in the light and reality of Christ and the New Covenant. Through Christ our Lord we have literally received the reality of what the old Jewish festivals merely symbolized. We must now go on to live in that reality. How can we turn back to that which has been fulfilled and abolished in Christ? We cannot. Now, the Lord has given us symbols for a New Covenant. When we take these, we are in reality partaking of *him* as the real Passover Lamb that has been sacrificed for us. We are receiving by faith those things that he purchased for us through the sacrifice of his own body and blood by way of the cross.