

In Leviticus chapter 23 God begins by saying:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.” (Verse 2)

Throughout the remainder of the chapter He outlines His feasts:

1. **The Weekly Sabbath:** (verse 3)
2. **Passover/Unleavened Bread:** (verses 4-8)
3. **Firstfruits:** (verses 9-14)
4. **Pentecost:** (verses 15-22)
5. **Trumpets:** (verses 23-25)
6. **Day of Atonement:** (verses 26-32)
7. **Tabernacles:** (verses 33-44)

Please keep in mind that all of the above are considered to be God’s feast days, including the weekly Sabbath. Some try to separate the weekly Sabbath from the annual feast days, claiming they are part of two separate laws – the moral and the ceremonial. The claim is that the weekly Sabbath is part of the eternal moral law, while the annual feasts, along with their Sabbaths, were part of the ceremonial law which was done away with at Christ’s death. One of the proof-texts given is found in Leviticus 23:37, 38 which says:

*“These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: **Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.**”*

However, this does NOT mean the weekly Sabbath is part of a separate law from all the other feast days. As can be seen by verse 37, God is speaking about the **sacrifices and offerings** made upon these holy days. There were two main sacrifices offered daily, morning and evening. Numbers 28:9-10 uses the same wording found in the above text in Leviticus when God instructs His people that the offerings presented upon the weekly Sabbath will be “beside” (in addition to) the offerings presented daily:

*“And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: **This is the burnt offering of every sabbath, BESIDE [in addition to] the continual [daily] burnt offering, and his drink offering.**”*

In Leviticus 23:37, 38 God is saying the same thing, that all the sacrifices offered on the annual feast days will be added onto the weekly Sabbath offerings when they fall upon the same day. Here is the *Bible in Basic English* version of Leviticus 23:38:

“These offerings are in addition to the offerings for the LORD’s Sabbaths, and in addition to your gifts, to all your vow offerings, and to all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.”

In Hebrews 10:5-10 the author explains that the purpose of Christ’s death was to take away our faulty appeasement mindset, which believed that God does not forgive unless He sees blood. The author contrasts the sacrificial offerings with the will of God saying, “He [Christ] taketh away the first [animal offerings], that he may establish the second [the will of God]. By the which will [the will of God] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Verses 9, 10). The taking away of the animal-offering-mindset exalts the will of God because God had never desired nor required animal offerings in order to forgive us in the first place (Psalm 40:6).

Further on in Hebrews chapter 10 the author explains that, even though the animal offerings are to cease, the appointed times in which they were offered do not:

*“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**” (Verses 24, 25)*

The assembling times are upon God’s feasts. They are “holy convocations” or “holy assemblies.” This is exactly what Ellen White teaches. She tells us that it was specifically the animal offerings that were to cease after the death of Christ:

*“When Christ was crucified, the inner veil of the temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, which event signified that the **ceremonial system of the sacrificial offerings** was at an end forever ...” (Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 2, 123.2)*

Please notice that she is specifically pointing out that the “ceremonial system” that came to end at the cross was the “sacrificial offerings”, not the feast days on which they were offered (see Daniel 9:27). In fact, she recommends that we keep observing “the morning and evening sacrifice” as times of prayer, just as Scripture teaches (Psalm 141:2; Acts 3:1):

“Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent ...

*Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. **Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry.**” (Child Guidance, p. 518)*

Read this next quote carefully:

*“Christ passed through all the experiences of his childhood, youth, and manhood without the observance of **ceremonial temple worship.**” (Review & Herald, Oct. 24, 1899, par. 11)*

We know for a fact that Christ observed God’s feast days. A few examples would be: The weekly Sabbath (Luke 4:16); Passover (Luke 22:15,16) and Tabernacles (John 7:2,37,38), but here Ellen White says He did NOT practice the “ceremonial temple worship” which we have seen is specifically the animal sacrifices. In John 15:10 Jesus said, “I have kept my Father’s commandments” and yet He did NOT participate in animal sacrifices. Through David, Christ said:

*“**For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.**” (Psalm 51:16)*

So, Jesus kept the feasts, but not in the same *manner* as the Jewish leaders. Ellen White wrote, “The principles presented by Christ, **the manner of observing feasts**, of praying to God, could not be properly united to the forms and ceremonies of Phariseeism.” (*Signs of the Times*, Sept. 18, 1892)

In Acts 21:23-26 we read about Paul participating in animal offerings. Much could be said as to why Paul and the elders of the church chose to do this, but for our study we will read what Ellen White says about it. On pages 404 and 405 of *Acts of the Apostles* she says, “The Spirit of God did not prompt this instruction; it was the fruit of cowardice” and “He [Paul] was not authorized of God to concede as much as they asked.”

As you can see, Ellen White spoke *negatively* concerning the decision to participate in animal offerings. On the other hand, she spoke *positively* concerning Paul’s observance of the feasts. Consider what she wrote about Paul observing the Feast of Pentecost:

*“Paul’s next scene of labor was at Ephesus. He was on his way to Jerusalem to **CELEBRATE** the Feast of Pentecost; and his stay at Ephesus was necessarily short. He reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue, and produced such a favorable impression that*

he was entreated to tarry there, and to protract his labors among them. His plan to visit Jerusalem prevented him from doing so; but he promised to visit them on his return." (Redemption: or the Teaching of Paul, and his Mission to the Gentiles, p. 65.3)

If his reason to observe the Feast of Pentecost was only to win the Jews, as it was when he participated in animal offerings, then why not just stay in Ephesus since he "produced such a favorable impression that he was entreated to tarry there"? The truth is, he went to Jerusalem to "**celebrate** the Feast of Pentecost."

On another occasion we find that Paul celebrated the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread with a GENTILE congregation in Philippi (Acts 20:6). Here's what Ellen White says about this:

"At Philippi Paul tarried to keep the Passover. Only Luke remained with him, the other members of the company passing on to Troas to await him there. The Philippians were the most loving and truehearted of the apostle's converts, and during the eight days of the feast he enjoyed peaceful and happy communion with them." (Acts of the Apostles, pp. 390,391)

Again, nothing negative about him observing the feasts. It could not have been to win the Jews since this was a Gentile church, full of the love of the gospel of Christ. A.T. Jones (one of the men who brought us "a most precious message") teaches us that "The first Christians being mostly Jews, continued to celebrate the Passover in remembrance of the death of Christ, the true Passover; **and this was continued among those who from among the Gentiles had turned to Christ.**" (The Great Empires of Prophecy, p. 213)

In 195 A.D. Polycrates reminds us that he, following the example of the apostles John and Phillip, "kept the fourteenth day of **the Passover according to the gospel**, never swerving, but following according to the rule of the faith." (Eusebius. Church History, Book V, Chapter 24). Speaking favorably of the Feast of Tabernacles, Ellen White writes:

"Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth." (Patriarchs and Prophets, 540)

"Anciently the Lord instructed His people to assemble three times a year for His worship [during Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles]. To these holy convocations the children of Israel came, bringing to the house of God their tithes, their sin offerings, and their offerings of gratitude. **They met to recount God's mercies, to make known His wonderful works, and to offer praise and thanksgiving to His name. And they were to unite in the sacrificial service which pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Thus they were to be preserved from the corrupting power of worldliness and idolatry. Faith and love and gratitude were to be kept alive in their hearts, and through their association together in this sacred service they were to be bound closer to God and to one another.**

In the days of Christ these feasts were attended by vast multitudes of people from all lands; and had they been kept as God intended, in the spirit of true worship, the light of truth might through them have been given to all the nations of the world ... **The Lord saw that these gatherings were necessary for the spiritual life of His people.** They needed to turn away from their worldly cares, to commune with God, and to contemplate unseen realities.

If the children of Israel needed the benefit of these holy convocations in their time, how much more do we need them in these last days of peril and conflict! And if the people of the world then needed the light which God had committed to His church, how much more do they need it now!" (Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 6, pp. 39, 40)

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