

Do the Holidays You Keep Identify Your God? Which System Do You Serve?

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The Bible states there are many gods or elohim/theos (Ex. 20:3; 1Cor. 8:5), but only One True God (Deut. 4:35, 6:4; Jn. 17:3; 1Cor. 8:6). The other beings, who are called gods or elohim, are in fact angelic spirit-beings created by the One True God. The elohim (gods) were involved in the creation of mankind (Gen. 1:26), but some rebelled and focused their attention and energy on subverting the plan of God (Jb. 1: 6-12; Dan. 10:13-14; Mt. 16:23; Lk. 22:31). When man was first created he was given freedom to make choices and instructions were provided so he could avoid being wrongly influenced by one of the chief gods who had chosen to live in rebellion against the One True God (Gen. 2:16-17 cf. Eze. 31:8-9; Isa. 14:12-15; Eze. 28:11- 19). Instead of remaining obedient to God's instructions, which clearly stated that they were to avoid the fruit/teachings of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve decided to partake/communicate with the god that Christ would later refer to as a liar (Jn. 8:44). This liar was symbolized by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17) because he knew the difference between right and wrong, according to the law of God, but chose to rebel against it. Once Adam and Eve made the decision to believe what Satan said (Gen. 3:4), they had in fact rejected the One True God and placed themselves and their descendants under the influence of a deceiving spirit world (2Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; Jn. 12:31; Rev. 12:9). Their decision to reject God was a sin (1Jn. 3:4) and lead to sorrow and tragedy (Gen. 4:6-8; Prov.14:12). This act of disobedience was the first sin of mankind and introduced death to all their descendants (Rom. 5:12). Under Satan's

influence, mankind cannot discern the truth of God unless they are called out of darkness (i.e. deception) through the action of God the Father (Rom. 2:4; Jn. 6:44). The Festival structure and Harvest sequence that God established for all mankind, shows the process through which everyone can come to the knowledge of God's truth, and the revelation of His plan for the reconciliation of the fallen creation; as opposed to Satan's customs and religious celebrations that he established contrary to God's will (1Ki. 12:32; Pro. 14:12; 16:25; Jer. 10:2-5). They are not in accordance with the will of God nor do they reveal the purpose of man. Instead, they are a counterfeit that cleverly conceal Satan's motives under the guise of being righteous (2Cor. 11:12-15; Rev. 12:9).

In this study, we will examine God's ordained feasts and Holy Day sequence.

It can be seen early in scripture, that mankind was given instructions regarding a Holy Day sequence (Gen. 2:2-3, 4:3-5; Gen. 19:1-3 cf. Jn. 13:5-15; 1Cor. 5:7-8). The festivals, with their associated symbols, were to teach and remind mankind that reconciliation to the One True God would be provided through a perfect sacrifice yet to come. That perfect sacrifice is mentioned in a prophecy found in Genesis 3:15.

And I will put enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (Body of Christ), and between your seed (those influenced by Satan as Cain was - cf. Heb. 11:4; 1Jn. 3:12; Jude 11) and her Seed (ref. Christ, a physical descendent of Israel and spiritual head of the congregation in the wilderness - cf. Acts.7:38); he (Christ) shall bruise your head (ref. to Satan's plans), and you (Satan) shall bruise his (Christ's) heel (ref. to Satan's actions against Christ and his church - cf. Ps. 41:9; Jn. 13:18; Rev. 12:1-6, 13-17) (NKJV)

Moses also issued a similar prophecy to remind mankind that a prophet would come, and that prophet was Jesus Christ (Deut. 18:15-19 cf. Jn.1:45; Acts 3:22-23). As Christ is central to the plan of the One True God, and is the instrument through whom mankind is reconciled, God symbolized various aspects of Christ's work on behalf of every individual in the annual Holy Days (Jn.1:29; 1Pet. 2:24). With this in mind, we can begin examining the various Holy Days that are mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. We will start with the weekly Sabbath which was established at Creation.

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all work which God had created and made. (Gen. 2:2-3)

God rested not because of fatigue, but rather to teach by example. It is not possible to focus on spiritual matters when conducting one's normal work and/or business affairs, nor is it possible to keep the day holy (Ex. 20:8-11; Isa. 58:13-14). Therefore, as God's work is centered on creating, he ceased from this activity on the seventh day to illustrate that His law is to be obeyed both in heaven and on earth (Ps.103:20-21 cf. Mat.6:10).

The weekly Sabbath points to a future rest when the activities of the Adversary (1Pet. 5:8) will cease (Rom. 16:20), and there will be peace on earth (Heb. 4:1-11). As this future rest is made possible by Christ's sacrifice, it follows that he could claim to be Lord of the Sabbath (Mt. 12:8; Mk. 2:28; Lk. 6:5) and also state that the Sabbath was made for all of mankind (Mk. 2:27 cf. Gal. 3:28). This commandment is reiterated in Exodus 20:8-11. Although it appears to involve only the seventh day of the week, the

apostle Paul revealed in Heb. 4:1-11 that the weekly Sabbath points to a future rest which will last for one thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6 cf. 2Pet. 3:8). Therefore, the meaning behind this command in Exodus 20:8-11 extends far beyond just the seventh day of the week. The importance of these other Sabbaths is stressed in a prophecy depicting the future reign of Christ during the one thousand year period mentioned previously by Paul (Zech. 14:16-19; Isa. 66:20-24). Christ showed that the commandments given in Exodus 20 were only a starting point and that much more was required by true followers of the Most High God (Mt. 5:21-22). This same principle applies to the weekly Sabbath. Keeping the seventh day Sabbath is the starting point which leads to many other Sabbaths (Lev. 23:37-39) and these Sabbaths are an integral part of the festivals of God (Lev. 23:1-44). The weekly Sabbath does not stand alone. In other words, there is more to obeying Ex. 20:8-11 than keeping just the seventh day of each week holy. It leads to other Sabbaths that explain the plan of God in much greater detail. For this reason, the Adversary does not want mankind observing these Sabbaths within the festivals of God (2Cor. 4:3-4; Rev. 12:9; 20:3). Christ revealed that the multiple Sabbaths in God's festivals pictured, and would eventually lead to, the complete forgiveness and redemption of mankind (Mt. 18:21-22; 2Pet. 3:9). In a physical sense, forgiveness for poor judgment and decision-making in the Jubilee cycle (seven times seven years), leads to the restoration of one's property (Lev. 25:8-17). However, Christ was showing in Matthew 18 that the real goal pictured by the Sabbaths, contained within God's Holy Days, was to free mankind from the spiritual slavery of Satan's system and restore the relationship between God and fallen creation. This would explain why Christ went far and above seven times seven when it came to the subject of forgiveness. He was really talking about forgiveness of sin as sin

is much more serious than making poor decisions or using bad judgment. Therefore, he was teaching his disciples that they needed to have the mindset of God (Phil. 2:5), which is willing to forgive all sin (Isa. 1:18-19).

There are seven other Sabbaths within the Holy Day sequence of God. These seven Sabbaths are a reminder that God has a plan that involves a period of seven thousand years, and six thousand are almost over (2Pet. 3:8; Jn. 9:4; Rev. 22:20). Consequently, mankind is very close to the commencement of the final one thousand years that Paul referred to in his writings. This thousand year period will be administered by Jesus Christ and his saints (Acts 1:9-11; 1Pet.2:9-10; Rev.11:15, 20:4-6) as opposed to the previous six thousand that have been under the influence of the Adversary, for which he will be judged (Jn. 16:11).

The first annual Sabbath within the Holy Day sequence of God commences the period of time referred to as the Days of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6; Deut. 16:3). This seven day period followed the death of the Passover lamb (Lev. 23:5-6). This Passover lamb was a temporary substitute that pre-figured the real Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29) who would be sacrificed at the same time as the lambs on the 14th day of the first month (Lev. 23:5; Deut. 16:1-2). After the death of Christ late on the 14th day of the first month (Ex. 12:6; Deut. 16:4), the first Holy Day Sabbath commenced on the evening of the 15th day of the first month (Ex. 12:16; Num. 28:17; Lev. 23:6). God counts a 24-hour day from the start of evening (dark) to the start of the next evening (dark), not midnight to midnight as mankind does (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; Neh. 4:21, 13:19; Isa. 30:29). Figuratively, the "rest" that Paul referred to in Hebrews 4:1-11, could not start until Christ fulfilled that aspect of the law dealing with sin (Heb. 9:22; Mt. 26:28). This is why the first Sabbath rest in God's Holy Day

sequence followed right after Christ's sacrifice. Next, there was a period of seven days during which no leaven was to be eaten. At this time of year leaven pictures sin (1Cor. 5:6-8), which is to be removed from everyone's dwelling (Ex. 12:15). Symbolically, this removal of leaven was to remind mankind that sin impacts our lives in a negative way and needs to be completely removed in order to bring about peace and happiness. However, the removal of sin is a process and does not occur overnight, which is why a seven day period is involved. At the conclusion of this seven day festival, there is a final Sabbath rest picturing the end result of Christ's work for those who are called during the period that scripture refers to as, "the first fruits harvest" (Rom. 8:23; 1Cor. 15:20-23; Jas. 1:18). Christ is the first of the first fruits harvest. This aspect of God's plan has been completely fulfilled because He raised Christ from the dead (Acts 3:26; 1Cor. 15:20, 23; Rev.1:5). In fact, the first sheaf of barley in the early spring harvest that was cut and brought to the Days of Unleavened Bread symbolized Christ being cut down (Lev. 23:10-11). The ears from this barley sheaf were to be parched and finely ground down (Isa. 53), which pictured Christ's suffering. The final product from this process was then waved before the One True God, picturing Christ's atonement (covering) for mankind's sin throughout the ages.

The third Sabbath occurs during the second major festival (Ex. 23:14, 17), which is referred to as the Feast of Weeks/Feast of Harvest/First fruits (Ex. 23:16), or Pentecost ([count 50] because a period of seven weeks [49 days] with the fiftieth day being a Holy Day). This Holy Day will always fall on the first day of the week now called Sunday, because the count begins from the day after the first weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:10-11). This Sabbath pictures both the end of the early harvest of mankind as well as a new beginning

for those who were not part of this period. This same principle of a new beginning is pictured in the Jubilee sequence when everyone within the nation of Israel could return to their inheritance on the 50th year; for example, if they had leased out their land, had relinquished their property due to unfortunate circumstances, or forced to because of poor decision-making, etc. (Lev. 27:24). In the Jubilee year everyone could start anew and re-build their lives. Therefore, God placed Pentecost (count 50) in the middle of the three major festivals because it represents the end of one era and the commencement of another. Figuratively, much of mankind left the inheritance they had from the One True God and focused on other concerns or priorities, but because He is merciful, He provided a time of refreshing (Acts 3:19) and the means through which mankind could be reconciled to their heavenly Father (Ac. 3:20-26). The two loaves of bread that were waved during this festival were prophetic foretelling the separation of Israel into two nations (i.e. Judah and Benjamin in Jerusalem and the other 10 tribes of Israel in Samaria). They also portrayed Israel's future reconciliation as a spiritual nation into which the whole of mankind could be grafted (Rom.11:13-36).

During the period of Israel's first Pentecost under Moses, various laws and commandments were given to the nation, but the people did not have the desire (i.e. heart) to obey them (Exodus 20). Therefore, a different mindset was required and Pentecost pictured the means through which this could occur (Jer. 31:31-36). This change towards a desire to obey can only take place in a progressive manner. Even during the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection, we do not see the entire world receiving God's holy spirit, only a few thousand (Ac. 2:41). This explains why God created the last series of Sabbaths in His Holy Day sequence, which

picture the eventual fulfillment of the prophecy in Joel 2:15-32.

The fourth Sabbath within the Holy Day sequence of God is the Day of (blowing) Trumpets (Lev. 23:24-25). This Holy Day is also the New Moon of the seventh month. It acts as a witness and warning to all the nations of this world and announces the coming of the last festival period in God's calendar (Lev. 23:33-36). Historically, trumpets are blown to gather people together for important announcements, to introduce important dignitaries, or to prepare for war. This Sabbath does all of the above because it is announcing the arrival of the King of kings (Jesus Christ – Rev. 19:16). This will take place amidst upheaval and battle both in the heavenly and earthly realms, because the Adversary knows that his time is over and his deception is over (Rev. 8:1-13; 9:1-12; 11:15).

Christ's first order of business in this final sequence is to restrain the Adversary. This activity is pictured in the fifth Sabbath also known as the Day of Atonement, or covering (Lev. 16:1-34; 23:26-32). On this Sabbath, the High Priest in Israel would lay his hands on a goat that symbolized Satan, who is ultimately responsible for all the sins of the nation. This goat was then released into a wilderness, which is symbolic of Satan's realm (Lev. 16:10). After the return of Christ, Satan will remain in this region of restraint for approximately one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). Then he will be released for a short period of time (Rev. 20:7-10) and the events that follow will lead to his final judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). Another goat was involved in the festival activities during the Day of Atonement, only this one was sacrificed because it pre-figured the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Lev. 16:8-9). The two goats were meant to picture similar beings because both Christ and the Adversary are referred to as Morning Stars,

a term that refers to a high rank in the angelic realm (Jb. 38:7; Isa.14:12; Rev. 22:16).

The sixth Sabbath introduces the Feast of Tabernacles, or booths (Lev. 23:39-43), which celebrates, among other things, the fall harvest with all the blessings that God has showered down upon the nation. The fall harvest is much larger than the earlier harvests in the year. This is to remind us that more people will be given the understanding of who the One True God is after Christ's return. This festival is celebrated over a seven day period which pictures the completion of God's plan ending with the seventh Sabbath, referred to as Great White Throne Judgment (Lev. 23:36 cf. Rev. 20:11-15; Eze. 37:1-14). This period of judgment commences after the second resurrection (Rev. 20:6).

In summary, we can see that the One True God does have a plan that He is working out for all of His creation and that mankind could be reminded of this throughout the year if God's Holy Days were observed.

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