

# God's Festivals "Shadows of Things To Come"

A fresh look at the Biblical Feasts and their  
purpose for Christians today.

- \* Should Christians follow God's calendar today?
- \* Does God's calendar still serve a purpose in today's world?
- \* The power behind the festal calendar and why it is still relevant today.

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## Note from the Author

This book is primarily intended for a Seventh-day Adventist audience. After 20 years of study, I am amazed at how my understanding has developed on this subject. I have no doubt it will continue to grow as long as my time lasts.

Keep in mind that the information presented here is a work in progress and is intended to stimulate the reader's interest and personal study on the subject. I have tried to "*test all things*" and "*hold fast what is good.*" I would gladly receive any feedback you may have.

I would especially like to thank Chad Kettner and Frank Harford for their encouragement, input, and editing skills. They have been a tremendous help to me in putting this work together.

My sincere desire that your understanding of God and His plan of salvation grows as you ponder the thoughts brought forward in this book.

All scripture references are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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# Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing interest among theologians and laity of various faiths, including Seventh-day Adventists, in the festivals of God. Two of the main questions that prompted this study are: (1) do these festivals have any relevance to the 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian church, and (2) what purpose would there be for us in celebrating these festivals today?

Over the past twenty years, I have studied this subject carefully and with an open mind. I believe there is enough biblical and historical evidence to warrant a deeper and more thorough investigation because I am convinced the evidence weighs strongly in favor of festal celebrations. If God's original purposes for the feasts were understood and experienced, they would have a significant and positive impact on today's Seventh-day Adventist Church. When these festal celebrations are experienced in the context of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, is doing, and will do for us in the future, the Gospel becomes extremely clear. With Jesus as the center and substance of the feasts, the Gospel is totally illuminated.

Jesus is what the festivals are about, and always have been.

The closer we look at the Sanctuary services the greater will be our understanding of God and His great plan of salvation. Each phase of Jesus' ministry is revealed in the sanctuary service, from the daily morning and evening sacrifices, through to the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

With that said, I do not believe that the feasts should be made a test of fellowship (as in a legal requirement), but an invitation to meet with Him. It has been my hope that, through a diligent search of the Scriptures, the truth will shine forth in its purity.

Sincerely in Christ,

Tom Stapleton

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## Nailed to the Cross

I have chosen to start this study with three of the most misunderstood New Testament verses that deal with the feasts:

Colossians 2:14, 16-17: “. . . having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. . . Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

Often individuals ask, ‘If the feast days and new moons are done away with, being nailed to the cross, why do Seventh-day Adventists insist on holding on to the Sabbath?’

Traditionally, Seventh-day Adventists have explained that Colossians 2:16 does not include the weekly Sabbath, but refers only to the feasts, new moons and the ceremonial Sabbaths. We need to know what was, and what was not, nailed to the cross.

Let us examine the context of Colossians 2:14: “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”

Whatever Paul talks about here is definitely wiped out, cancelled, and erased. But was it the Feast Days, New Moons, and Sabbaths that were taken out of the way or was it something else?

What was the “handwriting of requirements that was against us” that was “nailed to the cross?” Colossians 2:13 gives us the context: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven all your trespasses.” Trespasses (sin) and forgiveness are the focal points in this text.

In the Old Testament system there were certain penalties that were required to be carried out on the transgressor of the law. For

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example, in John 8:4, the Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman “caught in adultery, in the very act.” According to the law, she should have been stoned. These requirements in the law were to be carried out precisely as prescribed by the law (Deut 17:9-11). These regulations or requirements were handwritten in a book or scroll and were also called curses of the law. In this woman’s case, the record (trespass) that stood against her was adultery, the legal demand was that this sin was punishable by death; the law demanded that she die.

Other translations clearly bring this point out from Colossians 2:13, 14:

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record that stood against us with its legal demand. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross” (English Standard Version).

*“erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross”* (New Revised Standard Version).

When Jesus accepted our sins as his own, He accepted the full curse of the law; therefore the full penalty for sin was borne by Him at the cross, even the “*second death*.” For the penitent one who accepts Jesus as their sin bearer, the penalty for their sin passes from himself to Jesus, “taking it out of the way and nailing it to the cross.” Praise God! We are fully forgiven because Jesus has accepted our sins and the penalty for our sins, even the “*second death*.” This is the heart beat of the Gospel.

God has “wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us which was contrary to us and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” He paid it all!

Paul put it another way in 2 Timothy 1:10: “[Our Savior Jesus Christ] has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.” Where was death abolished? A Roman soldier did not nail our death sentence to the cross, but God. He is the only One who can transfer our penalty to another. “The wages

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of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord" (Rom 6:23).

When the Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, God nailed our well-deserved second death penalty to the cross, never needing to be paid by us because it was paid by Jesus.

Paul is not saying that the feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths were nailed to the cross but that our record and death sentence were nailed to the cross. It was the record of our sins and the penalty for them that were against us; "He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

By this text we cannot say that the feasts were nailed to the cross. Jesus gave the sacred times as a gift of love, to be a blessing for His children. We cannot say that these sacred times were "*against*" and "*contrary*" to them. The feasts were originally given as special times for God's people to celebrate the goodness of their Creator.

After sin, the feasts (this point will be covered later in this book) and the Sabbath took on additional meaning for the restoration of God's people. Before sin, the Sabbath was all about creation and celebration, after sin, its meaning extended to include freedom, salvation, and sanctification.

Two examples of this concerning the Sabbath are:

"Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deut 5:15).

Also through the Prophet Ezekiel God says: "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them" (Ezek 20:12).

The feasts, like the Sabbath, were originally given as special times of celebration, but after sin these appointed times became

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even more significant as they became avenues to lead us back to God.

The sacred times were a continual reminder throughout the year that the LORD was their Creator (Sabbath), Tree of Life (New Moon), Sacrifice, Redeemer and Justifier (Passover), Sanctification (Unleavened Bread), Resurrection (Firstfruits), Latter Rain (Pentecost), Sentinel and Judge (Trumpets), High Priest and Advocate (Day of Atonement) Light, Water, Shelter, Provider, Sustainer and Savior from this world (Tabernacles or Feast of Harvest).

We cannot say that these feasts were “*against*” and “*contrary*” to anyone. Nor can we say by Colossians 2:14-17 that the feasts were nailed to the cross. The feasts were intended to be a revelation of a loving God and an unfolding of His plan to save us; a compacted prophecy of the plan of salvation.



## Shadows of Things to Come

Let us now look at Colossians 2:16. I want to specifically look at the last part of the verse “regarding a festival or new moon or Sabbaths.”

“Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

1. Festivals include Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles.
2. New Moons include the first day of each biblical month.
3. Sabbath, in this text, refers to the seventh day of the week.

There are two reasons why the Sabbath here refers to the seventh day of the week:

1) The festivals include the seven annual holy days. Therefore when Paul refers to the festivals he would naturally include the holy days in the term “*festival*” because they are part and parcel of the festivals. Therefore, to suggest the phrase “Sabbaths” in this text is referring to the annual holy days would have Paul needlessly repeating himself. This is neither logical nor probable.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note this is the only place in the New Testament where we see a phrase using *festival, new moon or Sabbaths*.” This is a problem because we do not have another New Testament text in which we can compare. However, there is similar text construction used in the Old Testament of which Paul was an ardent student: Nehemiah 10:31, 33; Ezekiel 45:17; and 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:13, and 31:3.

“Then Solomon offered burnt offering to the Lord on the altar of the Lord which he had built before the vestibule, according to the daily rate offering, according to the commandment of Moses for the *Sabbaths, the New Moons* and the three appointed yearly *feasts*; the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feasts of Tabernacles” (2 Chr 8:13).

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All these texts have one thing in common: there is a progression of the festal calendar from weekly to monthly to yearly or in the reverse order. It would seem logical to conclude from these texts that when the writers are referring to festivals they are including the annual holy days. The new moons are obviously new moons, and Sabbaths are seventh-day Sabbaths.

2) In Colossians 2:16 the word *Sabbath* is from the Greek word "*Sabbaton*". This word correctly translated is singular, designating "the Sabbath", not plural as some translations have it. This plural rendering has led to the incorrect conclusion that it includes the feast days.

In the past, most scholars recognized the King James Version as the authorized version of the Bible. Now, it is generally accepted that it is not without fault. This is clearly seen in this text; "an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath *days*." The word "days" is a supplied word not in the original text. Notice the total change in meaning by adding the word "days." The text should read "an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath." The original text says "the Sabbath" (singular, not plural). This plural rendering has led to a mistake in the inclusion of the seven annual holydays from the term "the Sabbath *days*."

This Greek word "Sabbaton" is used throughout the New Testament as referring only to the Seventh-day Sabbath. Not once is it used to designate a feast day. To be consistent in our reasoning, the word "Sabbath" in this text must be the weekly Sabbath.

There are many of our own theologians that are now seeing this text in this light. William E. Richardson former chair of the Department of Religion, Andrews University wrote an article entitled "Sabbath: nailed to the cross?" This article was printed in the May 1997 issue of *Ministry* magazine. For further study on Colossians 2:14-17, I encourage you to read this article. It can be found on line @ <http://www.ministrymagazine.org> in the archives.

In Colossians 2:17, Paul goes on to say that these festivals, New Moons and the Sabbath "are shadows of things to come,"

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These shadows pointed forward to fulfillments still future from the time Paul penned the text, approximately 62 AD).

Shadows do not pass away until they collide with their reality. For example, the act of sacrificing a Passover lamb passed away when “Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). It is true that all animal sacrifices met their fulfillment in the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God; therefore animal sacrifices came to an end at Calvary where shadow (type) met reality (anti-type). However, the ultimate Passover will not be realized until the kingdom of God.

Luke 21:16: “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.”

The word “it,” in this text, refers to the Passover. According to Jesus the Passover will be “fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” This indicates that not all concerning the Passover has been fulfilled: sacrifice, yes; plagues, no; destroying angel, no; escape from the land of bondage to the land of freedom, no; Passover lamb meal, yes; marriage supper of the Lamb, no. These are only a few examples of the shadows and their fulfillments.

The Lord’s Passover is all about being redeemed from the land of slavery and entering into the Land of Promise. In all ages, this has been and will be accomplished through the Lamb of God.

The Lord’s Supper does not only commemorate His death, but also, typifies a grand future event. Let’s look at this point closely. When the disciples kept that last Passover with Jesus, they commemorated the Passover meal kept by ancient Israel before their departure from Egypt en route to the Promised Land. That last Passover Jesus shared with His disciples was to be commemorative for the Christian church as they would keep it in remembrance that “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). At the same time, it would also be typical of a future event: the last grand Passover that the church in all ages has waited for.

We can extend this to us today; our keeping the Passover would not only be commemorative but also typical of that grand

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future event. According to Jesus, all past Passovers have pointed to a future fulfillment: "I will no longer eat of [the Passover] until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). The last Passover that Jesus ate with His disciples was typical of the future fulfillment that according to His word would be "fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." We cannot say that the Passover was fulfilled at the cross. Our provision to pass over has been made, but the passing over to the Land of Promise has not yet been accomplished.

Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples that "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). Why was that? This was the night that every bridegroom looked forward to: the wedding. Jesus' purpose on that night was to knit His heart with their hearts. That was the night of nights for Jesus. His life on earth had all pointed to this night: the Groom alone with His bride. Jesus on that night with His fledgling church (His bride) would open to them "the mystery which had been hidden from ages and from generations. . ." (Col 1:26).

On that last Passover Jesus spent with His disciples, the focal point of the plan of salvation was to be revealed. His and His Father's love for them would be fully manifest. This was the ground upon which the war between God and Satan has always been fought. God's love was brought into question.

In God's calendar of events (the festal calendar), the time had come for yet another event. This event (the cross) would answer this question for all time: God is Love. The love of God was fully revealed on that Passover. Can there be any doubt about why Jesus desired to eat that Passover with them? He would reveal His love for them in its totality on that Passover. He would give Himself completely to His bride that night. This was in type the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

When we, as Christians, keep the Passover today, it not only commemorates Christ's sacrifice for us, but is also typical. It points to the time when Jesus will stand in the heavenly kingdom in front of the whole universe and marry His Bride (The Church). This will be followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Here again Jesus will gird Himself, as He did with the disciples at the last supper, and serve the redeemed of all ages in the Kingdom of

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God. This will be the Passover of Passovers; when the redeemed of all ages will have passed over from the land of bondage to the Land of Freedom. What a celebration that will be!

Therefore the Passover today is not only commemorative but also typical. When we accept Christ as our Passover Lamb, we become qualified to partake of the ultimate future Passover meal in the Kingdom of God.

We have thus far only discussed the Passover. The fall festivals are equally significant. They point to incredibly important events that are just ahead of us. We must understand these things. With an understanding of the importance of festal types and their ultimate fulfillments, it should be no surprise that the enemy of God has an unrelenting hatred for God's festal calendar.

God's calendar, understood correctly, reveals the future to us and gives us plenty of reasons to celebrate. As you will see later in this book, Scripture has foretold an attempted change to God's calendar. Christendom, for the most part, thinks that Jesus did away with God's festal calendar, but this is not so.

Each feast points to a different aspect of the plan of salvation, most of which have not yet been fulfilled. In fact the feasts teach the plan of salvation in its fullness. Here are a few examples of this:

As noted earlier, the **Passover** meal is, in type, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The **Feast of Unleavened Bread** is symbolic of the life of Christ recreated in the newly born Christian who has accepted Christ as his Passover sacrifice. Eating of the unleavened bread is symbolic of the believer's new life in Christ as they partake of the Bread of Life. It also points forward to ultimately being completely free from the presence of sin in our lives and around us, hence the search to rid the house of all leaven.

**Pentecost** is typical of the outpouring of the latter rain in the last days. Acts 2 is but a mere shadow of what God will do for His church in the last days. If God waited until Pentecost to pour out

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the early rain, is it not logical to conclude that He would wait until a Pentecost to pour out the latter rain on His waiting church at the end of time? Pentecost in Acts 2 is not only typical in event but also in time.

The **Feast of Trumpets** signals the beginning of Judgment.

As for the **Day of Atonement**, this definitely did not meet its fulfillment at the cross. Every Seventh-day Adventist should know that the events foreshadowed in this day are almost all still future.

“**The Feast of Tabernacles** was not only commemorative but *typical*. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and *pointed forward* to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth His reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner. At that time the wicked will be destroyed” (*Patriarchs and Prophets* p. 541, See also Matt 13:30 and Rev 14:14-20).

The **New Moons** mark the beginning of each month, as well as setting the dates for the festivals. This point is covered later in the book. The shadow appears from three texts: Ezekiel 47:12, Isaiah 66:23, and Revelation 22:2. The New Moons will be the days on which we come to eat of the tree of life. This being the case, the fulfillment of the New Moon did not meet its fulfillment at the cross.

The **Sabbath** is also a shadow. It not only commemorates our creation but also our re-creation as we rest in Him on the Sabbath. Additionally, it also points forward to the glorious Seventh-day Sabbath rest in the new earth. This is for sure; the rest we enjoy during the Sabbath now is truly only a shadow of the rest we will enjoy during the Sabbath on the new earth. As the Sabbath is a memorial of creation, it is logical that it is also typical. The Sabbath points forward to the time when we will celebrate the re-creation of our planet; a time when God “will make all things new” (Rev 21:5).

The fact that God created this earth and left the Sabbath as a memorial of creation gives us the assurance that He will re-create

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this earth and leave the Sabbath as a memorial of His re-creation. When you look at the Sabbath in this way, it is truly a “*shadow of things to come.*”

As we remember how the Lord has led in the past, it gives us great faith and courage for the future.

## Biblical Support for the Feasts

Evangelicals condemn Seventh-day Adventists for our inconsistency in our interpretation of Colossians 2:16: "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths."

Evangelicals are more consistent than we are with this text. They conclude that the Sabbath in this verse is the Seventh-day, which it is, but they err when they say that Paul is doing away with the Sabbath as well as the Feast Days and New Moons. They are consistent within the text, but have Paul doing away with the whole package, when in fact he is not doing away with any of it.

As I have already noted, Paul is saying that it was our record of sin and our death sentence that were nailed to the cross. He is telling the Colossians to not let anyone judge them for regarding Feast Days, New Moons and Sabbaths as they "are shadows of things to come".

With the understanding that Colossians 2:14-17 does not teach that the feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths were nailed to the cross, a question needs to be answered: Is there enough scriptural evidence to determine that the Feasts continued to be celebrated after the cross just as the Sabbath was?

A careful study reveals their continued observance after the cross by the followers of Christ. There is also scriptural evidence that these Feasts and New Moons will be celebrated in the kingdom of God just as the Sabbath will be. The book of Acts has most of the New Testament festal references. It is also noteworthy that Luke, a Gentile convert, wrote Acts and used the feasts as time references.

A question comes to mind: Why, so many years after the cross, was the festal calendar used for referencing time if the festal calendar was no longer valid, especially since the record was not written for the Jews only but for the Christian church of which we are a part? Could it be because the feasts continued to

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be celebrated as the Sabbath was? As the Sabbath is used as a reference for timing in the book of Acts, so are the feasts. Let us closely examine these references.

- **Acts 2:1:** “*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come.*”

God waited until “the Day of Pentecost had fully come” to pour out His Spirit. God is on time every time. We may not be keeping His calendar but He sure is; you can count on it. This feast has met only partial fulfillment; the complete fulfillment is yet to come in the final outpouring of the Spirit known as the “Latter Rain.”

God is consistent; this Latter Rain outpouring will not only be fulfilled as to the event but also as to the time specified in the festival calendar.

- **Acts 18:21:** “I must by all means *keep* this coming feast in Jerusalem.”

Luke quotes Paul as saying he must “keep” the upcoming feast rather than simply saying he would attend it. Could it be possible that those in Ephesus would have liked Paul to keep that feast with them? First Corinthians 16:8 seems to indicate that Paul had already introduced Pentecost to the Ephesians. But at this time, Paul wanted to keep it in Jerusalem with the apostles and elders to share what God had been doing through him for the churches in Asia.

Acts 15:2 indicates that Jerusalem was at that time the headquarters for the Christian church. This may be why Paul wanted to keep it there.

- **Acts 20:6:** “But we sailed away from Philippi *after* the Days of Unleavened Bread.”

Why did they sail away after the Days of Unleavened Bread? The answer is simpler than we may think.

Ellen White wrote in *Acts of the Apostles* p. 390-391: “At Philippi Paul tarried to *keep* the Passover. . . The Philippians were the most loving and truehearted of the apostle’s converts, and

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*during the eight days of the feast* he enjoyed peaceful and happy communion with them.” Paul was keeping the feast in Philippi with newly converted Christians.

It has been said that the feasts could not be kept anywhere but in Jerusalem, but Jesus said “your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt 23:38). The gospel now was to go to the Gentiles. Because of the rejection of the Messiah, the sanctuary in Jerusalem was left desolate of the presence of God. What purpose would it serve to bring someone to a sanctuary where the presence of God was gone?

The sanctuary in Jerusalem had lost its significance after their rejection of Jesus. Paul’s taking the gospel to the Gentiles and keeping the feast in Gentile territory teaches by example that the feasts could now be kept wherever you are.

Another point to consider is that the feasts may be a part of the gospel for three reasons:

- 1) When the feasts are understood they clearly teach the good news of the gospel. God’s festal calendar proves who Jesus was; “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7).
- 2) The feasts teach the plan of salvation in its entirety. An understanding of the feasts brings tremendous meaning to the plan of salvation revealing our Savior’s work at every stage; a compacted prophecy of His ministry.
- 3) For ancient Israel, keeping the Passover had a dual purpose: Firstly, it commemorated their salvation through the blood of the lamb placed on the doorposts of their homes. This was done in obedience to God before they left Egypt for the Promised Land. Secondly, it pointed forward by faith to a time when the true Lamb of God would be sacrificed, providing their deliverance from this world of bondage into the Land of Promise.

Similarly for us today, the Passover has a dual purpose: first, it is commemorative of our salvation in Jesus as we look back in faith to when “Christ our Passover was sacrificed for

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us" (1 Cor 5:7). Secondly, we too look forward to escaping this world of bondage to enter into the kingdom Jesus is preparing for us.

By keeping the Passover today we would demonstrate our faith in Jesus' promise that He will eat it with us when "it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16).

The Passover has always been commemorative of a past event and typical of a future greater event. In every age the feasts have been, and are, a faith transaction on the part of the believer. They point backwards to deliverance from bondage and forward through a sequence of events that culminates in an entrance into the land of promise. One of God's main purposes in the feasts was to develop our faith in His provision for our salvation. Is it any wonder why the enemy of God has made them seem to be all about works and not faith?

- **Acts 20:16:** "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost."

After Paul and Luke had kept the feast of Unleavened Bread with the Philippian church, they rushed on to Jerusalem to be there for Pentecost.

- **Acts 27:9:** "Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the *Fast* was already over."

The "*Fast*" here refers to the Day of Atonement. Here again Luke is marking time by the feasts, clearly indicating that the festal calendar was still being used at least two decades after the cross. Luke assumes that the readers of Acts, who were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles and who today are mostly Gentiles, would be familiar with this festal calendar. The fact that Luke refers to the Day of Atonement as "the *Fast*" means that the Day of Atonement, at the time Luke penned Acts, still carried with it its original practice and meaning.

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As Seventh-day Adventists, how can we say that the Day of Atonement met its fulfillment at the cross? If we say the Day of Atonement met its fulfillment at the cross are we not denying our own end-time theology? Our message demands that the Day of Atonement did not meet its fulfillment at the cross.

- **1 Corinthians 5:7, 8:** “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.”

When I first became a Seventh-day Adventist, I searched for a command in the New Testament to keep the Sabbath. The only one that is close to a command is Hebrews 4:4-9. However, this is written to the Hebrews and therefore can be deemed as written for the Jews only. The best support for Sabbath observance is by the example the apostles set for us in scripture after the cross and by the absence of any new law to the contrary.

When I began to search the New Testament for a direct command to observe the feasts, I could not find one until 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 jumped out at me: “. . . Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore *let us* keep the feast. . .” The beauty of this is that it is not a command but an invitation to celebrate the feast.

- **Luke. 22:15, 16:** “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.”

The great Passover will be fulfilled in the kingdom of God; therefore it will be celebrated in the kingdom of God. Because the Passover was celebrated by the disciples after the death of Jesus and will be celebrated in the future kingdom, is there any logical reason why it should not be celebrated in the present?

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### Old Testament texts:

- **Isaiah 66:23:** “And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the LORD.”

It would appear from this text that the Sabbath as well as the New Moon shall be kept in the New Earth. Remember, as we will cover later, the New Moon sets the timing for the feasts. Therefore, if the New Moon stands in the kingdom, this would indicate that the feasts will also stand.

- **Zechariah 14:4, 12, 16:** “And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, . . . And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths. . . And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of host, and to *keep* the Feast of Tabernacles.”

The context is clear; this event is in the future. It seems logical that this event will happen on the earth after the millennium when all the wicked of all ages will fight against the New Jerusalem. They will try to overtake it but will be destroyed by the second death, at which point sin and sinners will be no more (Rev 20). The celebration of our deliverance and our oneness with God will be celebrated from “year to year” throughout eternity!

When all these texts are studied together, it would seem that the apostles, as well as the converts to Christianity, celebrated these feasts after the cross. The fact that the Sabbath was kept by the followers of Jesus after the cross is often cited as evidence that the Sabbath commandment did not change. The same can be said of the feasts. Furthermore, the Biblical support that the Sabbath will be kept in the new earth is used for additional evidence that there has been no change in the Sabbath

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commandment. Again, the same can be said of the feasts as Jesus made it clear to the apostles at the last Passover He celebrated with 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” (Luke 22:15-16).

## The Jerusalem Council: Acts 15

Acts, chapter 15, is often cited as proof that the feasts have been done away with. However, a careful reading reveals that the feasts are not the topic under discussion; in fact the feasts are not even mentioned in the chapter. The issue here was twofold:

1. How was a person saved; faith or works?
2. What were to be the minimum requirements expected of “those from among the Gentiles turning to God” (Acts 15:19).

These two points had become very controversial in the newly developing church because “certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘*unless* you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you *cannot* be saved’ ” (Acts 15:1). Notice the text says that “unless you are circumcised. . . you cannot be saved.” This was never the case in any age; everyone has and always will be saved by their belief and not by their works.

Romans 4 is clear on this issue. Paul makes it very plain that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, the one to whom was given the rite of circumcision was accounted righteous “while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also” (Rom 4:11).

It was not by Abraham’s works, but by his faith he was accounted righteous (Rom 4:9). Herein lays the main point being dealt with in Acts 15. There were men of the sect of Pharisees who believed in Jesus, yet rose up saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Law of Moses” (Acts 15:5). This was such an issue that the apostles and elders came together in Jerusalem to consider this matter:

“And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did

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to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they” (Acts 15:7-11).

The yoke these “men of the sect of Pharisees” were commanding the new converts to put on was clearly salvation by works/law.

At the conclusion of the Jerusalem council, a letter was sent to the Gentiles stating that “. . . it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well” (Acts 15:28-29).

We need to understand that this was a minimum requirements list. We cannot conclude by this text that these changes would be the only changes they would ever make. What about the Sabbath, tithing, dietary laws and so on? They are not listed; does this mean they are done away with? No, of course not.

The new converts in Acts 15, along with all those who have ever been grafted into the tree of God, will grow in the knowledge of His will and bear fruits (works) worthy of repentance as He leads them heavenward.

Acts 15 is dealing with the two issues:

- Being saved by faith apart from the works of the law.
- How much do you ask of “those from among the Gentiles turning to God” (Acts 15:19).

I believe God would be well pleased if His church today would learn these two lessons from the book of Acts.

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## Unity and Diversity

This study would not be complete without looking at Romans 14:4, 5. "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. One man esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it."

In the Roman Church there were some that observed the festivals and some that did not. The ones observing the day were judging those who were not, and those who were not keeping the day were judging those who were observing the day. Paul does not make the issue whether to observe or not to observe a day, but he counsels on two other points:

1. Whatever side of the issue you find yourself on, observing the day or not observing the day, do not judge one another but allow each other the freedom to choose and grow. This non-judgmental attitude has always been the only thing that can bring unity on this and many other issues that the church has faced in any age.
2. Whatever you do, let it come from a conviction in your own mind. A conviction that is brought about by the Holy Spirit helping us to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). I appreciate the way that Paul always allows room for growth; the sign of a seasoned evangelist.

# Paul and Ellen on the Feasts

According to Scripture, Paul continued keeping the feasts after his conversion experience. By the record of Scripture, it would seem this was his practice until his death. Some insist that the only reason Paul kept the feasts was in order to appease and reach the Jews. This traditional viewpoint cannot be supported by scripture.

God gave the Festivals, New Moons and Sabbaths to teach not only of God's goodness, but also to teach the plan of Salvation, from beginning to end. They were "not only commemorative but also *typical*" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 541).

It does not seem logical that Christ would abandon any typical system until it collides with the reality, at which point the teaching tool would no longer be needed because the reality has come. To the Jew, the Passover lamb was a lamb. Our Passover Lamb is Christ, the true Passover Lamb. Therefore, Paul says, "Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor 5:7-8).

The content of this text suggests Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to "keep the feast" of Unleavened Bread in the right spirit. Furthermore, it would seem by this text that for the Corinthian church, keeping the feast was not the issue here; that was a given. The point of the text is the spirit in which the feast was to be kept; "not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

It is also important to note that Paul still refers to the festal calendar at this late date (approximately 56 A. D.). The fact that Paul here still refers to the feasts does not prove that they should be kept; but it should not be overlooked in the over-all picture.

For Seventh-day Adventists, when a challenge with scripture arises, a common practice is to appeal to the writings of Ellen

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White to see if she wrote on the subject in question. This is where things become a bit confusing with this particular subject. She does not say anywhere that the feasts should not be kept, nor does she specifically say they should be kept. Why is this? It would seem it was not an issue for her time. However what she does say of the feasts is definitely worth reading.

Ellen White spoke very highly of these special seasons. I have not found anywhere that she interprets Colossians 2:14-17 as Paul nailing the feasts to the cross. When examining other things she wrote, they would seem to indicate that she did not believe that.

She mentions in *The Acts of the Apostles* (p. 390-391) that "At Philippi Paul tarried to *keep* the Passover, . . . 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." Although it is not clearly stated, these converts were probably made up of both Jews and Gentiles. She does say, however, that they were converts to Christianity.

My question is: Why are Paul (Jew) and Luke (Gentile) *keeping* the eight-day feast with newly converted Christians? Surely Paul and Luke were not *keeping* the feast to explain that it was no longer to be kept, especially when God gave the feasts to His people for the purpose of "*peaceful and happy communion*" (AA, p. 390-391).

History reveals that the feasts were practiced by the early Christian church. There is a wealth of information on this subject on the internet, so I will not go into the historical aspect in this book.

It should be noted that Ellen White was fully aware of Paul's keeping of the feast with Gentile converts to Christianity. Yet she does not indicate in any way that Paul was doing something that he should not have done. If she felt it was wrong for a Christian to be keeping the feasts, she surely would have said so.

Fast forward to today; the moment someone says they are keeping the feasts, most pastors will immediately respond by insisting they should not. Have we changed our position in the last

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hundred years? Sister White knew that Paul was keeping the feast with new converts to Christianity, yet she remained silent on the matter of right or wrong, but approves of it as a “*peaceful and happy communion.*”

Today, if I told a pastor I was keeping the feasts with their new converts, he would probably have something different to say. Why the change between Ellen White’s response and the typical response from the majority of those in leadership today? I believe the tide is turning as more and more people are studying this subject, and it is my hope and expectation that in a future printing of this book this response will no longer need to be covered. If this is “present truth” let us not be found rejecting His gift of love. Let us extend grace to each other and let the Holy Spirit convict each individual heart.

Later in the book of Acts, Luke records Paul’s experience when he shaves his head and made a vow (Acts 21:23-26). Ellen White comments on this. She actually corrects Paul by saying that “he was *not authorized by God* to concede as much as they asked” (AA, p. 405, this account is just fourteen pages after she records Paul and Luke keeping the feast of Unleavened Bread with the Philippian converts). She has pointed out other shortcomings when she has believed the prophets have made mistakes. This being the case, if Paul was wrong to keep the feast with the Philippian converts because they were no longer applicable, or even an insult to God, surely she would have said so.

Ellen White has a chapter in her book *Patriarchs and Prophets* entitled “The Annual Feasts” in which she speaks highly of the feasts, stating the benefits of them, all of which we could benefit from today. She covers the purposes for which God gave the festal system to His people and not once does she indicate the feasts are passed away as she clearly says of the sacrificial system.

She did realize the tremendous blessings Israel gained by the observance of them. The record of the days of Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah attest to the revitalization of Israel through and during these festal gatherings.

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Could it be that the Lord might be lifting His hand in these last days to reveal yet another glorious gem in order to bring us closer to Him and closer to each other during these times of celebration? The feasts help us better understand the plan of salvation and bring substance and reality to our faith.

Possibly Ellen White did not receive all the light on this subject, so we must turn to the Greater Light, the Scriptures. God, whose timing knows no haste or no delay may have chosen not to reveal this subject to Ellen White in its entirety. This is why I have chosen to make the Scriptures the primary source of information. If we will not accept something because Ellen White did not teach it, we may be in danger of rejecting the very message that God may be sending His church today.

Since the beginning of the Great Reformation, truth has been continually unfolding, bringing present truth to each generation. Could God be opening before us in these last days another fold in the fabric of truth?

There is another Ellen White statement from her book *The Desire of Ages* p. 652 that is often referenced to prove the feasts have been done away with:

“Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages.”

There are a few problems we encounter when we try to prove our teachings from the writings of Ellen White.

1. Was there anything more for her to learn and understand as far as the restoration of truth is concerned? If she had a
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complete knowledge and understanding of all Scripture she would have been the first prophet in history to have had that experience, and if so, that would make her on par with God Himself.

2. Did she write down everything she needed to relate to us as far as truth was/is concerned because she is not now available for consultation?
  3. Was there anything she was holding back on because the church in her time was not ready to hear some of the counsel she could have given? This not telling everything you know is a divine principle. The other prophets as well as Jesus used this principle throughout their ministries. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come He will guide you into *all truth*; . . ." John 16:12-13. Did Ellen White ever claim she had been guided into "*all truth*?" I do not know of any statements that she made to indicate she had an understanding of all truth. I am aware of several to the contrary.
  4. Lastly and probably most importantly, if we must use Ellen White to prove even one position which we hold that cannot be clearly established from Scripture, it will cause at least two monumental challenges to our outreach:
    - 1) What happened to the cry of the reformation: "The Bible and the Bible only" which Ellen White subscribed to.
    - 2) Secondly, if the message we present to the world contains things that we have to use Ellen White to prove, then it will be necessary to have people believe in Ellen White before they can hear the whole counsel of God. Then we run the risk of being lumped in with other faiths that have more than one source of authority.
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These challenges go against the position Ellen White held, she believed her writings were less than the Bible and pointed to the Bible.

I do not use Ellen White quotations to prove any position of Scripture for these reasons. Ellen White did not understand every point of scripture, and she was well aware of that fact. Another problem we can encounter is that we may find ourselves using her statements to prove a position for which she did not intend. This was being done even before she died and she was not happy about it. Before we examine the above quote from *The Desire of Ages* we will look at a few others to help us grasp her understanding of Scripture. These following statements involve principles of the reformation of which she played and we are playing a role.

“In the time of the end *every divine institution* is to be restored. The breach made in the law, at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired.” (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 678). We need to closely examine this statement.

What is meant by the phrase “*every divine institution* is to be restored?” The feasts were/are *divine institutions* that were *changed* “at the time the Sabbath was changed by man.” Does this mean they will be restored? It is possible. If you were to ask Ellen White this question one hundred years ago she may have answered it by either: “yes” “no” or “I do not know.” How can we know for sure? She is not here to ask. Therefore, some have taken the liberty to use her writings to justify their position even though her statements are not definitive and were not written to support the position in which they are being used today. If the keeping of the feasts was a subject of discussion in her day, I am sure she would have spoken clearly about it. It may be possible that she did not have a position on the subject of keeping the feasts. This is probably why she did not make clear statements as to whether or not the feasts were done away with as she does the sacrificial system. This is why the only safe thing to do is to go to the Bible.

Let's look at another one: “There are glorious truths *to come* before the people of God. *Privileges and duties* which they *do not*

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*even suspect* to be in the Bible *will be* laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, they *will* know more and more of the oracles of God, and be *established in right doctrines*" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 114).

Now let us unpack this quotation: "There are glorious truths to *come* [future] before the people of God. *Privileges and duties* which they *do not even suspect*; to be in the Bible *will be* [future] laid open before the followers of Christ [those who will go where Jesus leads them]. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, they *will* [future] know more and more of the oracles of God, and be *established in right doctrines*." One thing for sure; she is talking about a group of people that from her day would live in the future. What are these "privileges and duties" she is talking about? Why didn't she tell us what they were? Did she even know what they were? Did she know, and not tell us because the church in her day was not ready hear them? Unfortunately she is not here to answer all these questions.

Do you understand the problems we have when we try to prove a position using her writings? Who is this group of people she refers to as "the people of God?" Are they Seventh-day Adventists or Christians in general? I believe by the context of the whole article, she is referring to Seventh-day Adventists. If this is the case then there are "privileges and duties which" we "do not even suspect to be in the bible," She is stating that there are "privileges and duties" to be opened to us that we do not realize or suspect to be in the Bible. Could the annual festivals qualify as some of those privileges and duties? Do Adventists suspect that God's Word teaches that the feasts are for us? I believe it would be safe to say that most Seventh-day Adventist would not even "*suspect*" that the Bible teaches such things. Does this quote prove the feasts should be kept? Absolutely not, but they definitely *could* qualify as "privileges and duties" that we "do not even suspect to be the Bible" for us.

Another quotation: "There are **old**, yet **new truths** still to be **added** to the treasures of our knowledge" (*Review and Herald*, Feb 25, 1890).

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This is another quotation that should not go unnoticed. Old truths (from the Bible) that are new to those who discover them *will be* (future) *added* to the church. Does this quote prove the feasts should be kept today? Absolutely not. Could the feasts qualify? Absolutely. They are old truths, but new to those who discover them today.

One more quotation: “Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher; he *will* find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which *we think* is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, *we may discover errors in our* interpretation of Scripture. Christ would have the searcher of His Word sink the shaft *deeper* into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value *will be found*. The Word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (*Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898 paragraph, 10-15).

Now let's have a close look at it:

“Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will *never* be the reward of *indolence* [Thesaurus for indolence: laziness, lethargy, idleness, sloth, sluggishness; this is beginning to sound like the parable of the sleeping virgins “they *all* slumbered and slept” Matt 25:5]. Investigation of *every* point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher [there is a rich blessing for those who personally check out every point that has been received as truth]; he *will* [this is not a might find but a will] find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which *we think* is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, *we may discover errors* [therefore the question begs to be asked—do we have errors] *in our* interpretation of Scripture [in other words, make sure what you believe is true because it “*may*” not be]. Christ would have the searcher of his Word sink the shaft *deeper* into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value *will be* found [here again this is not a “might find jewels” but will “find jewels of *inestimable* value”. Why are they of inestimable in value? Could it be possible that these jewels correct “errors in our interpretation of Scripture” and this is why these jewels have *inestimable* value]? Do not rule it out, this quotation

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suggests this possibility. If you believed something to be true but it could be demonstrated that it was actually false, what is more valuable to you truth or error. Truth when contrasted with error makes truth all the more valuable (inestimable value). The Word of God [she plainly states that our focus needs to be God's Word] is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ" (*Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898 paragraph, 10-15).

This is an amazing quotation; I have a personal experience with the principle in this quotation. About twenty years ago I went through a crisis in my Seventh-day Adventist experience (seven years after my conversion to Adventism). This drove me to do the very thing she suggests: investigate "every point that" I had "received as truth." I was blessed by what she said would follow a thorough investigation. I, being the searcher, was "richly" repaid. She goes on in the quotation to say that the searcher; *will find precious gems, and "may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture."* I am humbled to say that some of what I had accepted, believed, and taught to others was not entirely correct.

This journey in discovering old, yet new truths has been filled with amazement and apprehension. I have learned to be careful about putting my feet in concrete without first thoroughly checking it out. I have learned to always keep my mind open to the idea that I may be wrong. I have, along my journey, found others who have discovered these same truths by their own personal investigation. This has been an encouragement to me. Most of the people that oppose these new, yet old truths are not willing to even consider that they may be wrong on any point in which they believe. This is the same experience and mistake the Jewish leaders made in the time of Christ. "They would not admit even the *possibility* that they themselves did not rightly understand the Word, or that they had misinterpreted or misapplied the Scriptures." (AA p. 79)

In summary of the above quotations, there are some obvious limitations to using Ellen White to prove doctrinal positions, they are:

1. She is not here to clarify exactly what she meant.

2. We often use her statements for purposes for which they were not written.
3. She may not have had understanding of the point of scripture that we are struggling with today.
4. God may not have given her understanding for a particular reason (the point under discussion today was not under discussion in her day).
5. She was not the end of the story; God's Word contains the end of the story.

Now let's look at her statement in *The Desire of Ages* p. 652:

"Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, that He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover [lamb] with His disciples, He instituted in *its* place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages."

Some conclude from this statement that a Passover kept in a Christian context is not to be done. Her purpose for writing this statement was to show that the Passover in the context of Judaism was to be done away with forever. The year long preparation of the lambs for sale, the procession into Jerusalem on the tenth day of the first month, the slaying of the Passover lambs at the temple, the eating of the lamb during the Passover meal etc. has passed away forever. The Jews had made a whole economy revolving around the sacrificial system. It had deteriorated to the point that Jesus cleansed the temple of priests and sacrifices twice; once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end. Why? They had turned the sacrificial system and the sanctuary into a means to prosper. In other words; sacrifices

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purchased from the temple meant acceptance by the temple priests. Death to self was not the message of the day. The concept of presenting oneself as a living sacrifice had all but disappeared until the Lamb of God presented Himself as the living sacrifice.

The message from the sanctuary in Christ' day was: "Come buy your sacrifice and be saved." This was no different than the Catholic system that would follow in its steps. Salvation had become something to be purchased. It is no wonder that Jesus cleansed the temple not once, but twice. The *gift* of salvation was not made available to the common people. In order to get it they must not only bow to the leaders but also they must purchase their provision for salvation, in the blood of their lambs. This is why in *The Desire of Ages* on page 36 Ellen White declares that "The whole system must be swept away."

Two points to explain this further are: firstly; Jesus was the Lamb of God; the typical sacrificial system met its fulfillment in the death of Christ. Therefore the sacrificial system "passed away forever." Secondly, the economic system of the temple revolved and prospered from the sale of sacrifices and the priesthood had departed from the simple message of the gospel; salvation through grace and not of works. The system could not be reformed because the ones who directed it would not be reformed. Therefore, she wrote that "the whole system must be swept away." Does this mean that God no longer has a people? No, in fact, Paul in Romans 11 refers to God's New Testament church as "Israel," also; he says "if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29).

Abraham is rightly considered the father of the Jewish nation. We become the seed of Abraham upon accepting Christ and that makes us part of Israel through adoption. In Ephesians 2 Paul puts it another way: "once Gentiles in the flesh . . . you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel . . . But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. (v 11-13). Paul declares that the Gentiles become part of Israel through Christ and are no longer "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" (v 12). The New Testament church was still Jewish and the Gentile converts became members

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of it. The Institution of the God given Biblical religion did not change at the death of Christ. Within the framework of the Biblical religion God instituted the appointed times as times for Him to intimately connect with His people. If the festivals are done away with does this mean that God no longer wants to meet with His people (Spiritual Israel) at His divinely appointed times? The New Testament church continued to celebrate these feasts through to the close of the Biblical record. Scripture contains no change in this regard. Furthermore, if we will but search the historical documents of the post apostolic times we will find that the feasts were a part of their worship practice also.

Ellen White is not making this statement in *The Desire of Ages* to do away with the feasts. She is saying that God could not longer work through the Jews as lead by their priests and their leaders because they were in it for the money. What God was about to do to the Jews should have been no surprise to them. In Matthew 21 Jesus was conversing with the Jewish leaders. He asked them what the owner of the vineyard would do to the vinedressers who killed those who were sent to them and in turn killed the son of the certain landowner who planted a vineyard. They sealed their destiny by their own response: "They said to Him: 'He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease *his* vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons'" (Vs. 41).

The apostles became the new vinedressers. God did not do away with the religion that He gave to His people. He did away with the unfaithful leaders of His people and because those leaders were in control of the temple and all that was involved with it He had no choice but that "The whole system must be swept away." Was the Jewish faith done away with? No, only those who led it.

There are a few problems that surface in regard to this *Desire of Ages* statement:

1. The Passover was considered to be a festival which spanned an eight day period; from the fourteenth to the twenty-first of the first month of the Biblical year.

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According to *The Desire of Ages* quotation “the system of *types and ceremonies* that for *four thousand years* had pointed to His death” was to come to an end. She says that the things that were done away with had been practiced for “four thousand years.” This goes clear back to the fall of man. Are those who are using the above quotation willing to concede that the Passover had been kept since the fall of man; “four thousand years?” If so there are additional problems; one being this would mean the Passover was given to Adam and Eve then passed on to their descendants who were not Jews. If this is the case, then it was not the festival of the Jews only; which was most likely the case because in Leviticus 23: 4 they are called “the feasts of the LORD” and not the feast of the Jews.

2. This quotation at best only refers to the Passover and not all the feasts as some want to include. She is specifically saying that the “types and ceremonies that [had been done] for four thousand years [that] had pointed to His death . . . were to “pass away forever.” According to Jesus the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover will be celebrated and “fulfilled in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 22:16). Therefore, we can not say the Passover has passed away forever? If we interpret Ellen White’s *Desire of Ages* statement as saying the Passover was to pass away forever at the Last Supper or His death then Jesus was wrong by saying the Passover will be celebrated and kept in heaven. Do we want to tell others that Ellen White contradicts what Jesus said?
3. Also, the other feasts; such as Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles are typical of Second Coming events. Their specific purpose is to typify the Second Coming events such as the outpouring of the latter rain, the judgement,

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the close of probation, and the ingathering of the earth. These feasts specifically do not portray the death of Christ. It was the symbols that had been done for four thousand years that pointed to His death that were to “pass away forever.” There were symbols “that . . . pointed to His death” contained within the Second Coming festal types; it was these symbols that were done away with, not the festal types themselves.

The reason why these symbols that portrayed Christ's sacrifice were contained within the festivals was to help the people to understand that they would not make it through the coming festal fulfillments unless they accept God's provision in His Son's death. How can we say that these festivals (shadows) passed away forever when what they typified was not the death of Christ but the events that are connected to His second coming? Second Coming festal types have not been fulfilled. Therefore, there is still a purpose for celebrating and observing them. By celebrating them, a better understanding of the fulfillments that are just ahead of us will follow.

4. If we are comparing the festival of the Jewish Passover (an eight day feast) with that of the “great” Christian festival of Communion this is hardly a comparison at all. Can we really compare an eight day feast with a service that in most Seventh-day Adventist churches takes about forty-five minutes? The structure of *The Desire of Ages* quotation is interesting and I am not sure that even Ellen White understood fully what she wrote (she is not here to ask). She states that the “great” Passover festival of the Jews was replaced by the “great” Christian festival; Communion? “He instituted *in its place* the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice.”

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There are two things being said in the quotation which we need to explore. She states: "As He ate the Passover [lamb] with His disciples, He instituted in *its* [the lambs] place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice" [unleavened bread and wine]. The statement says that He exchanged the lamb (type) that for four thousand years had pointed to His death (reality) with the new symbols of the unleavened bread and wine. This was the great exchange; the eating of the sacrificial lamb was replaced by the unleavened bread and the wine. For four thousand years the lambs had been slain; Jesus died the second God's festal clock struck the hour.

There were two lives that were spared at that second; one for eternal life (the thief on the cross) and the life of the lamb at the temple as it fled from the priest when the great earthquake shook the knife from his hand. This signified that the "Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) had died and the sacrificial "system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death" had "passed away forever." The sacrificial system was now "passed away *forever*" from the system that God instituted. The slaying of the lambs and all that was involved with that process had passed away forever. Jesus did not do away with the eight day festival but the lamb and all that was involved with it because the Lamb of God had been slain; thus fulfilling the sacrificial part of the Biblical religion.

5. "How do you put something in place of the Passover feast (an eight day festival)? If I told you that I was doing something in place of church on Sabbath, you would probably think that I would not be in church on the seventh day of the week because I was doing something else.

The Passover festival was two dimensional; it had a place in time (fourteenth day to the twenty-first day of the first month) just as the Sabbath has a place in time (the

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seventh day of the week). It was also placed in space which was Jerusalem, differing on this point from the Sabbath, which could be celebrated in all lands. If I substitute something in place of the Passover festival, I would be putting something in its place in time and space. Let's look at the time aspect first. Technically, is she saying that this great festival of the Christian church (Communion—a forty five minute service) takes the place in time of the Passover eight day festival? This is not reasonable.

Furthermore, she goes on to say that the great Christian festival that replaces the Jewish festival “was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages.” We may be having a problem with the *Desire of Ages* statement because we do not know all that is involved in the great Christian festival that replaced the Jewish Passover. Could it be that the “great” Christian festival that replaced the “great” festival of the Jewish Passover (eight day festival) was a Passover celebration (eight day festival) done in a Christian context? This now is comparing apples to apples. One replaces the other in the time dimension; day for day.

Now, let's look at what she writes in *Acts of the Apostles* (p. 390-391). “At Philippi Paul tarried to *keep* the Passover (twenty plus years after Jesus' death and resurrection). You would think that when Paul went to Arabia (Gal 1:17) immediately after his conversion, at which time he came “in close connection with Heaven, and Jesus communed with him, and *established* him in his faith, bestowing upon him his wisdom and grace” (*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 34) that Jesus would have made it clear to Paul, telling him that the Passover was now not to be kept because Jesus had fulfilled it. Paul's own example declares otherwise: “The Philippians

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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" (Ibid).

The Christian Passover, as Christ instituted it, with its new symbols, was to take the place in time of the Jewish Passover with its symbols and "was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages." Therefore, Paul was doing in Philippi exactly what he should have been doing: keeping a Christ centered eight day Christian Passover festival at its appointed time as Jesus instituted it.

Paul replaced the symbol of Jesus' death in the lamb with the unleavened bread and pure wine of the vine (1 Cor 11:24-25). Now we have two great festivals one Jewish and one Christian. The Christian eight day Passover festival as kept by Paul, and the Jewish eight day Passover festival as discarded by Paul. Paul was in perfect harmony with this quotation in *The Desire of Ages* on page 652. **Are we?**

In summary; this Ellen White quotation from *The Desire of Ages* should not be used by either side of the festival issue because it really does not prove either position clearly because it was not written for that purpose. However, it does prove, without a doubt, that the Passover, as the national festival of the Jews (kept as did the Jews, complete with their sacrifices) has passed away forever at the death of Christ. I might be bias, but I believe it to be very weak in regard to proving that Christians should not keep a Christ centered eight day Christian Passover celebration as kept by Paul. By what she wrote in *Acts of the Apostles*, Paul seems to be doing what was right; that was to keep the Passover in a Christian context "in all lands through all ages." Should we not follow his example?

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## Prophecy Predicts Attempted Changes to God's Festal Calendar

In Daniel 7:25, we find a description of the activities of the little horn power: "He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time."

In the past we have interpreted Daniel 7:25 "to change *times* and law" as referring to the Sabbath only, but by using lexicons and concordances we can derive a better understanding of the text. This is why several newer translations clearly state that the festivals are included in the "*times*" that were changed.

The Amplified Bible reads: "And he shall speak words against the Most High [God] and shall wear out the saints of the Most High and think to change the time [of sacred feasts and Holy Days] and the law" (Dan 7:25).

Other translations say:

"...attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law" NRSV

"...try to change their sacred festivals and laws." NLT

"...try to change their religious laws and festivals" GNT

"...try to change the set times and the laws." TNIV

"...intend to change religious festivals and laws" HCSB

Daniel 7 was originally written in Chaldee (Aramaic) and the word "*times*" (H2166) is a translation from the Aramaic word "zeman", which can translate to the Hebrew word "moed" (appointed time) which is translated to "feast" in English. Therefore Daniel 7:25 is speaking of the little horn changing the set "times" of the law, which includes the feasts of the Lord.

## “Times” H2166

זמן

z<sup>e</sup>man

zem-awn'

(Chaldee); from H2165; the same as H2165: - season, time.

## H2165

זמן

z<sup>e</sup>man

zem-awn'

From H2163; an *appointed* occasion: - season, time.

## H2163

זמן

zaman

zaw-man'

A primitive root; to *fix* (a time): - appoint.

## H4150

מועד

מועד

מועדה

mo'ed

mo'ed

mo'adah

mo-ade', mo-ade', mo-aw-daw'

[Hebrew] From H3259; properly an *appointment*, that is, a fixed *time* or season; specifically a *festival*; conventionally a *year*; by implication, an *assembly* (as convened for a definite purpose); technically the *congregation*; by extension, the *place of meeting*; also a *signal* (as appointed beforehand): - appointed (sign, time), (place of, solemn) assembly, congregation, (set, solemn) feast, (appointed, due) season, solemn (-ity), synagogue, (set) time (appointed).

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Notice that Daniel says the little horn “thinks” or “attempts” or “tries” to change the time of sacred feasts and Holy Days. The reason for this is that you can only “*think*”, “*attempt*” or “*try to change*” something that you cannot change.

In Leviticus 23, there is a list of the appointed times of the Lord, and the Sabbath is at the top of a list that includes: the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and the fall feasts; the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

When God's festivals and the Catholic Church's festivals are carefully examined it can be clearly seen that Satan has carefully and cunningly counterfeited God's festal calendar just as he did the Sabbath. Why would he do this? I would like to suggest five primary reasons:

1. For exactly the same reason he substituted a false Sabbath, to divert the mind of the worshiper from the true God.
2. To partially supply the divinely planted need for us humans to worship and return thanks to our Maker.
3. To supply the human need for times of fellowship and celebration, especially with family and other believers.
4. So that we would not understand the plan of salvation clearly as it is revealed in the feasts.
5. The feasts help us to understand the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.

This disregard and substituting of God's direct command parallels the experience of Cain; there was a form of worship but it was not as God had required. People in every age have followed the path of Cain. “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt 15:8, 9).

There is a statement Ellen White penned in *Prophets and Kings* (p. 678) that possibly even she did not understand

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completely: "In the time of the end *every divine institution* is to be restored. The breach made in the law, at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, is to be repaired."

I realize that she is talking primarily of the Sabbath, but by saying "every divine institution" opens it up. If the Festivals and New Moons are divine institutions, which they are (*Prophets and Kings*, p.101), and if they did not meet their fulfillment in the cross, which they did not, and if they were changed at the time the Sabbath was changed by man, which they were, then it is reasonable to conclude that "*in the time of the end*" they will be restored.

If we will open our eyes we will see that this restoration is happening everywhere; it is going on almost unnoticed if we are not looking for it. Look around, the internet has sites popping up almost daily explaining this growing movement. There are pockets of Christians, including Seventh-day Adventists, independently discovering and proclaiming this truth from the four corners of the earth.

Notice that in the following text the context demands that just before the coming of the Lord we are commanded by God through the Prophet Malachi to:

"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the *statutes* and judgments, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. . . Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Mal 4:4-6).

The "Law of Moses" mentioned here, without question, includes the Ten Commandments. But please notice, special mention is given to the "statutes and judgments." Why? Because they, too, have been forgotten, hence the call ". . . Before the great and dreadful day of the LORD" is to "Remember. . ." (Mal 4:4-5).

"Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Elijah truly is coming first and will restore all things" (Matt 17:11, referring to the prophecy of Malachi).

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The “*all things*” Jesus is talking about must be referring to the commandments, statutes and judgments. There is a reason why He used the word restore. There are no blind spots with God. “*In the time of the end*” the commandments as well as the statutes and judgments are in need of being restored. This would mean that they were lost for a period of time, which they have been.

It appears that at the time the Sabbath was changed by man the breach made in the law included more than we first thought, and the restoring of all things is happening now, but is not yet complete. This restoration of truth indicates that we are truly living “*in the time of the end.*” The finishing touches of the restoration and repairing are being done as you are reading this book. God is on the move. Please, let us not be found fighting against this awakening.

The Protestant Reformation was a time of building blocks, putting truth upon truth over a long period of time. It appears that the Reformation is not yet complete.

As evangelists are fond of saying, ‘there is no text in the New Testament that abolishes the Sabbath – therefore it still stands.’ By the same reasoning, the lack of a clear text abolishing the feasts is good evidence of their continuance.

Just as the true Sabbath was lost sight of for nearly 1,500 years, logically the feasts were lost sight of as well since they were both dropped at the same time. As the Sabbath was substituted by a counterfeit Sabbath, we should not be surprised that the Holy Days were substituted by counterfeit holy days such as Christmas and Easter.

History shows that when the early church gave up the Sabbath, it was primarily to distance itself from the Jews. They not only gave up the Sabbath but many have failed to notice in those same history books that they also gave up the observance of the other holy days and adopted the pagan holidays in their stead. The Catholic Church was instrumental in finishing this work.

You may recognize the following quote by Thomas Enright, who was a priest and the president of Redemptorist College

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(Roman Catholic) in Kansas City, as it is often used in Seventh-day Adventist evangelistic meetings. The last sentence (underlined) however will be new to most readers as it is always left out.

"I have offered and still offer \$1000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound, under grievous sin to keep Sunday holy. It was the Catholic Church, which made the law obliging us to keep Sunday holy. The Church made this law long after the Bible was written. Hence said law is not in the Bible. Christ, our Lord empowered his church to make laws binding in conscience. He said to his apostles and their lawful successors in the priesthood, 'Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be binding in heaven.' (Matt.16:19; 18:17 and Luke 16.19). The Catholic Church abolished not only the Sabbath, but all the other Jewish festivals." -- T. Enright CSSR, St. Alphonsus (Rock) Church, St. Louis, June 1905.

Why has the last sentence of this letter in the past been left unspoken at our evangelist efforts? During the developmental stages of our evangelistic efforts, historical documents were gathered to further prove the teachings of the Bible. This quotation was one of those documents that seemed to nail down the role that the Catholic Church played in regard to the change of the Sabbath.

As Sabbath keepers searched through old documents they discovered this letter by Thomas Enright. This quotation was considered to have inestimable value. What they were looking for was proof that the Catholic Church had changed the Sabbath to Sunday; this is exactly what was found.

It seems the feasts were not the next order of business in God's reformation process. I believe that whoever discovered this letter from Enright found exactly what they were looking for; Sabbath change confirmation. They were not looking for anything that had to do with the church's change of the festivals, therefore this gem remained hidden. This is precisely how God works; one thing at a time, truth upon truth, over a long period of time.

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This quote has been used by our well meaning evangelists without knowing that the last sentence involving the feasts was missing. How did this happen? It is my personal belief that there has not been any plan to withhold truth from anyone. We need to look at the bigger picture. In the providence of God, truth has unfolded from age to age, generation to generation. Truth was added to truth, old ideas and understanding at times had to be discarded. Many of the doctrines that the Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches today were gathered together over time in this manner.

For example, Sunday had been the accepted day of worship for over a thousand years. But, in the early nineteenth century as the reformation was gaining momentum, the providence of God, whose timing knows no haste or delay, led the early pioneers to discover the Sabbath truth. This became a point of controversy for many but for those who wanted to do His will the promise was given: "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17).

The timing of Sabbath observance is also an example of this progression. In the early stages, it was believed the Sabbath should be observed from 6:00 pm. to 6:00 pm. This was eventually revised as new texts came to light, making it clear from their study of scripture that the new day actually began at sunset: ". . . from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath" (Lev 23:32).

There has always been an order in the reformation process. In the providence of God the Sabbath truth returned the law of God back to His people. This parallels the story of the Ark of the Covenant being captured by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4 followed by the declaration: "The glory has departed from Israel! Because the ark of God had been captured. . ." (1 Sam 4:21).

Later ". . .David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet" (2 Sam 6:15).

The returning of the Ark to the people of God represented the restoration of the Law and the Presence of God

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When the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church discovered the Sabbath, the Law of God was given back to His people. The Sabbath needed to be set back into stone where it belonged. This restoration of the law was followed by the marked blessing of the Spirit of God in the gift of prophecy.

“Where there is no revelation [prophetic vision] the people cast off restraint: But happy is he who keeps the law” (Prov 29:18).

“. . . The law is no more, And her prophets find no *vision* from the LORD” (Lam 2:9).

Obedience to God’s law was and is critical for the restoration of the Spirit of Prophecy. As we come into harmony with His will, He has a legal right to bestow His richest blessings upon His church.

This unfolding of truth to successive generations was understood by no one better than our Master. It was Jesus who said “I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now. However when He the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth; . . .” (John 16:12-13).

You cannot lead people faster than they can/will follow. God in His infinite wisdom has laid out the order of the unfolding of truth. Today, as we are approaching the closing work of the reformation, it is my firm belief that God, in His timing, is revealing yet another truth in His grand revelation of restoring all things. Ellen White understood this concept very well when she stated:

“There are glorious truths to come before the people of God. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God’s will, they will know more and more of the oracles of God, and be established in right doctrines” (*That I May Know Him*, p. 114).

We are currently standing at a crossroad. After years of prayer, study and reflection on this subject, I am convinced that the Lord is bringing to light things long forgotten and misunderstood that we “do not even *suspect* to be in the Bible” or history.

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A study of church history reveals that the early Christian church continued to celebrate the Sabbath as well as the feasts many centuries after the cross.

During the annual festivals, Israel experienced its greatest revivals. God designed these festivals as times of celebration and renewal. One such revival was recorded in the book of Nehemiah when he brought Israel together for the Feasts of Trumpets and Tabernacles:

“Now all the people gathered together as one man. . . on the first day of the seventh month. . . . So the whole congregation of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness” (Neh 8:1-2, 17).

Ellen White, referring to this revival, says: “It would be a scene well pleasing to God and angels, would His professed followers in this generation unite, as did Israel of old in a solemn covenant to ‘observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes’ ” (*Southern Worker*, June 7, 1904).

During another such revival it is recorded: “And the Lord listened to Hezekiah and healed the people. So the children of Israel, who were present at Jerusalem, kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with great gladness; . . . making confession to the Lord God of their fathers. . . . So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel, there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. . . and their prayer came up to His Holy dwelling place, to heaven” (1 Chr 30:20, 21, 22, 26, 27).

Luke records a similar event: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven” (Acts 2:1-2).

God designed these feasts for these spiritual blessings; can we afford to miss out on them?

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# God's Purpose for the Feasts

Since God has given us His Sabbath as a special time for Him to bless us, can we afford to miss it? Obviously not.

Therefore, if God has given us the feasts as special sacred seasons for Him to bless us, can we afford to miss them?

Please think about this carefully, these questions demand answers.

Recent polls conducted by General Nutrition Centers, Quicken, and others show that more than 50 percent of Americans vow to appreciate loved ones and spend more time with family and friends this year.

God in His infinite wisdom understands our basic human needs:

- knowledge of our Creator
- fellowship with our family and friends

God incorporated into His original calendar special weekly and annual times for worship, celebration and fellowship with family and friends. Our Creator knew that if He did not set this time aside for us, we would not. We see this clearly in the way the Sabbath has been neglected today. Only those who recognize the value of the fourth commandment in regard to worship and fellowship experience its blessings.

The feasts carry with them the same intent as the Sabbath, but instead of a weekly celebration, the feasts are annual celebrations and often longer than one day.

During these annual celebrations, family and friends, who are too busy or separated by distance, can come together for fellowship. This is what God had originally intended. Have our human needs changed? Have God's purposes changed? The

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feasts can still serve the same purpose that they originally had. If God saw fit that His calendar included special times for us to meet with Him before sin, how much more important is it now since our fall into sin?

Remember the two questions that began this study: (1) do these festivals have any relevance to the 21st century Christian church, and (2) what purpose would there be for us in celebrating these festivals today?

You will notice that the answers to these two questions are found through understanding God's original purposes for giving the festivals to His children. The reasons God gave the festivals falls into two categories: before sin and after sin.

Before sin (see next chapter):

1. The annual celebrations would be of a longer duration than that of the weekly Sabbath celebration. The basic human need for worship, celebration, and fellowship with friends and loved ones would be met.

After sin:

1. God's original purpose would still apply: worship, celebration and fellowship. After sin, God's people were to continue these celebrations. However, at this point, the feasts took on additional meaning to reveal truth about the plan of salvation (as did the Sabbath).
  2. Each feast pointed to a different phase of the plan of salvation. Therefore, every year, beginning in the spring and through each festal season, God's people would systematically recall each facet of the plan of salvation from beginning to end (past, present, and future).
  3. The planning for these events would help God's people keep their focus on Him and His plan for their lives.
  4. The feasts gave opportunity for God's people to celebrate by faith the future ultimate fulfillment of the festal calendar.
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5. These feasts are prophetic and when understood correctly reveal tremendous insights into future events.
6. The most important reason of all and the summation of all of the above: to increase the faith of God's people so that they would choose to serve Him now and in the world to come.

The prophetic aspect of the feasts should be especially noted. It is a fact that the fulfillment of the festal calendar is still in the future.

We must remember that the feasts were typical of future ultimate fulfillments; they were object lessons in the form of types. Even at this present day, we do not fully understand the lessons they teach. A few examples of fulfillments are as follows:

1. Final out pouring of the latter rain (Pentecost, fulfillment: Revelation 8:1-5)
  2. Announcement that the judgment of the living will open in heaven (Trumpets). A close examination of the judgment teaching in Scripture indicates it has everything to do with the living. This, we can all agree (and hope) is still future. We are told that the "Three Angels Messages" of Revelation will be repeated with greater force and emphasis. Is it because at some point in the future that "the hour of His judgment [for the living] has come?" (Rev. 14:7). After all, let's be honest, this is what really matters to everyone. Please do not lose sight of the fact that the Leviticus 16 Day of Atonement concept is typical of the final judgment of mankind. The teaching from Leviticus 16 is that all those *living* in Israel were entering into the final moments of judgment on that very day. We find the fulfillment of these things in Revelation 15:1-8.
  3. Close of Judgment (Day of Atonement) which will be followed by the seven last plagues (Rev 15-16).
  4. Final ingathering of the Earth (Feast of Tabernacles) Revelation 14:14-20. Please compare the celebration during the Feast of Tabernacles in Leviticus 23:40 (type) with its fulfillment in Revelation 7:7-17. Both have the saints waving
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palm branches and praising God. Revelation 7:15 proclaims that God, “. . . who sits on the throne will  *dwell among them*” and verse 17 declares: “the Lamb. . . will shepherd them and lead them to  *living fountains of waters.*” Both of these events were typified in the Feast of Tabernacles service. Also see John 7:37-38 where Jesus “on the last day, that great day of the Feast” of Tabernacles proclaims Himself to be the source of the “living water.” This event in John is now typical of Revelation’s fulfillment.

5. God’s final offer for acceptance of Christ, everyone’s Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed for all the world (10th day of the 1st month.)
6. The Last Passover on earth then God’s people will be en route for the Promised Land (leaving this land of bondage for the Land of Freedom). This parallels the experience of the children of Israel and the mixed multitude as the last call was given to accept of the Passover lamb. After they did this they left their homes and went into the wilderness for the promise land.
7. Firstfruits: Resurrection, special or possibly the first resurrection. Remember Jesus rose on the Day of Firstfruits as a fulfillment of the type. Jesus now has become a type of all those who will be raised on that resurrection morning.
8. Living and dwelling free from sin (Feast of Unleavened Bread).
9. Celebration of the ultimate Passover meal which will be eaten in Heaven (the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19:9). This is the meal which every Passover feast was typical. This is the meal which Jesus promised us when we have passed over to the Heavenly Canaan: “I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:16).

This by no means is a complete list; these are only a few examples of many that could be given.

Let us not forget our past, the early pioneers chose a feast day for the return of Jesus (Day of Atonement, October 22, 1844).

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They were onto something, were they correct? Not quite, but what came out of their mistake was right; they uncovered the sanctuary that was broken down and buried beneath the rubble of fable and tradition. Let us clear the rubble and build on that foundation which they located. "Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary" (Ps 77:13). The message that proceeds from the sanctuary is God's appointed means for the salvation of man. The festivals when understood correctly direct the mind to the throne of God. Most of these festal types point to ultimate fulfillments still future to this day. These things demand our study because "the end of the ages has come" upon us (1 Cor 10:11).

There is another point that needs our attention. The enemy has another trap set and that is: because there were animal sacrifices done on the feasts (Num 28:17-39), this made them an inseparable part of the ceremonial/sacrificial laws and therefore no need to celebrate them. It is true; there were services and sacrifices that were ceremonial in type that prefigured the death of Jesus done on the feast days. The enemy of all truth always uses some truth to set a trap.

Question: because the feasts contained additional sacrifices other than that of the regular daily morning and evening sacrifice, do we do away with the feasts? Before we answer this question, we need to understand something extremely important, and that is the purpose of the feasts.

There were also additional ceremonial services including additional sacrifices done on the seventh-day Sabbath (Num 28:9-10). Does this negate the Sabbath? Please, stay with me. How about the regular daily morning and evening sacrifices (Num 28:3-8); should we not have morning and evening worship because they used to sacrifice in the morning and evening as part of the worship experience? Please, understand, the appointments that God has set forth in His law still stand; it was our provision for sin that has been fulfilled not the appointed times. We do not now sacrifice because the True Sacrifice has been made. What the feasts themselves typified was not fulfilled at the cross (this point has already been clearly covered).

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Were the feasts instituted solely for the purpose of sacrificing? If so, then, they should clearly not be kept today. If they were instituted for an appointed time for God to meet with His people, then that is an entirely different matter. The reason there were additional sacrifices done on these days is because God's presence was among the people at those times in a special way. Remember the feasts were divine appointments when God said that He would meet with them.

It has been extremely important for God's people in every age to understand that if He was to be with them, they would absolutely need a sacrifice of His choosing. Right from the entrance of sin there was a sacrifice required. ". . . the LORD God made tunics of skin and clothed them" (Gen 3:20). Please notice; the LORD God (Jesus Christ Himself) "clothed them" with the offering He provided. This is why we are told in the book of Revelation that Jesus was ". . . the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

Every sacrifice ever made for sin has been a type of the true Lamb of God. This is why when Adam and Eve accepted God's provision for sin by physically putting this covering on, they could live. When God's ancient people sacrificed by faith and according to God's requirements, God counted them righteous because God saw His Son in their sacrifice. We, too, must put on the righteousness of Christ by asking Him to apply His sacrifice to our account.

This was the difference between Cain and Abel's offering. One contained blood and one did not. The law requires the death of the sinner. Therefore, a substitute was provided. Abel recognized this, and he demonstrated it by offering "the firstlings of his flock" (Gen 4:4), making it acceptable to God. This is why additional blood was spilled during these special appointed times, so that the people would not miss this point. If they/we are to live in the presence of a holy God we need a Holy Sacrifice that has spilled His blood to prove there was a death. It was/is not possible to be in God's presence and have fellowship with Him without such a sacrifice.

This is why there were daily morning and evening sacrifices every day of the year. If God was to be with His people during

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each day, they would need to have a sacrifice to meet the legal demand of the law. The sacrificial law still stands today. The law requires that if we, who are sinners by birth (nature), are to live each day with God, there would have to be the death of an innocent victim. This would satisfy the law that says "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek 18:20). When we accept the Sacrifice made for us, the law is satisfied. For this reason we can "come boldly to the throne of grace" (Heb 4:16). The difference in the law of the sacrificial system is that now we do not sacrifice pigeons, doves, lambs, bulls, goats, etc. because what they typified has been fulfilled. When we accept Jesus as our innocent sacrifice, the sacrificial law is satisfied.

Please note, the law of sacrifices is not done away with; we must all still have a Sacrifice. However, that sacrifice is now found in Jesus.

On the Sabbath and on the feasts, there were additional sacrifices as well as the regular morning and evening sacrifices. Every sacrifice prefigured the sacrifice of the True Lamb of God. Ultimately, if we are going to live in the presence of God, it is imperative we understand ". . . without shedding blood there is no remission" of sin (Heb 9:22). Why were there additional sacrifices at these special times? Everyone needed to understand ". . . without shedding blood there is no remission." Now when we partake of the richness of the feasts, we see Jesus everywhere we turn because He is the substance of the feasts.

God still desires to meet with us. His desire to be with His people is stronger now than it has ever been. He has been separated from His people far too long. He longs for these appointed times for He gave us the appointed times to be with us. They were not created for the purpose of sacrificing.

The appointed times were made for man to be with God, not for sacrificing. Why would He decrease the number of divine appointments with His New Testament church? Does He love the Israel of today less than Israel of old? Please remember, the Bible calls the feasts: "the feasts of the LORD" (Lev 23:4). They are His feasts; should we not want to accept an invitation to His feasts?

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The total number of His annual divinely appointed feast days is seven, God's favorite number. Please don't miss this.

God's original purposes for the feasts in worship, celebration, fellowship with family and friends, and instruction in righteousness and prophecy are as valid today as when they were given. Therefore, there are blessings and benefits for all who choose to celebrate the feasts today.

# When Were the Feasts Given?

I would like to start this chapter with an appeal to your reasoning powers. At times, we must come to conclusions combining Scripture and reason. We do this when we do not have a clear "thus saith the Lord." There are examples of this in our teachings. One such example of this is our understanding of the Sabbath.

The Genesis account tells us: ". . . 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 His work which God had created and made" (2:2-3). This text tells us what God did. We conclude from this text that Adam and Eve as well as their faithful descendants observed the Sabbath. I do believe this to be true; however, we do not have clear Scriptural evidence to substantiate this.

There is no clear Scriptural evidence that the Sabbath was kept by any man or woman before Israel's wilderness experience in Exodus 16 (approximately 2500 years after creation). Yet we correctly conclude that the Sabbath was kept by God's true followers from creation.

Exodus 5:5 is used as a proof text that Moses brought God's people back to the Sabbath. "And Pharaoh said, 'Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest from their labor.'" In this text Moses does not use the word "Sabbath/Shabbath" (Strong's # 7676), but, "rest/shabath" (Strong's # 7673). We reason that this text alludes to the Sabbath because the word "Shabbath"/Sabbath is derived from the word "shabath." The word "shabath" used in Exodus 5:5 is correctly translated as "rest" and not "Sabbath". While connecting these two words is reasonable, it is not without challenge, because the word "Sabbath/Shabbath" is not in the text.

We also use Genesis 26:5 that declares: "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes,

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and My laws.” Although the Sabbath is not mentioned specifically in the text, we have reasoned that because the Sabbath is a commandment it must be included. This is a valid connection, but let’s not stop there. If we can use this text to prove Sabbath observance before Sinai, we can also use it for proof of festal observance before Sinai. By this same reasoning, it would be equally valid to conclude that God was making a clear reference to the feasts, as well, because they are called statutes. “You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month” (Lev 23:41).

There is no clear Scripture to show that the Sabbath was kept by God’s people from creation, yet we rightly conclude that it was. I bring this point up because we have this same situation with the feasts; there is no clear Scripture stating that they were kept from creation. However, if we will put forth our God given reasoning powers on this topic, I believe there is plenty of evidence that the feasts were part of God’s original plan in His creation. In fact, after a thorough search, we will find that there is more evidence for the feasts being kept pre-Sinai and clear back to the creation account, than there is for the Sabbath.

As we have already seen, the feasts will be kept in the kingdom to come. “I will no longer eat of it [Passover] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:16). If the feasts were a part of God’s original creation, then there is no reason that they should have been discontinued. We must not lose sight of the fact that Scripture tells us that it was the “little horn” power that “shall intend to change times and law” (Dan 7:25). We are going to look at some texts that indicate the feasts most definitely predated the giving of the law at Sinai. As we go through this segment of our study we must be aware of two points:

1. The validity of festal celebrations today does not stand or fall on whether the feasts were a part of the creation account. The feasts are valid today because they were not fulfilled at the cross and therefore their fulfillments are still future; “Shadow of things to come” (Col 2:17). However, if it can be demonstrated that they were part of God’s original plan before sin then this would seal the
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case as to their purpose for all mankind through all ages just as we say of the Sabbath.

2. According to Daniel 7:25, it was the little horn that changed God's appointed "times" of worship and not God or Jesus.

Some say that there is no clear Scriptural evidence of God's people keeping the festivals before He gave them at Sinai. On the surface this would appear so, but a thorough study of this subject reveals that God was operating on His festal calendar well before Sinai.

In fact, the origin of the feasts goes all the way back to creation. On the fourth day the record says: "Then God said; let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years" (Gen 1:14).

Unless someone pointed it out to you it is very unlikely that you would see the significance of this text in regard to the feasts. The word "seasons" in Genesis 1:14 is the Hebrew word "moed", which in most places in the Bible is translated as "feast". Now you can see that the meaning of the text changes somewhat. This text is telling us that God will use the heavenly bodies for signs and moeds (feasts).

Furthermore, in Luke 21:25, Jesus says that "there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars" to indicate the timing of His return. So what do the sun, moon, and stars have to do with the seasons (moed or feasts)?

The following commentary is from the NET Bible:

Genesis 1:14: "God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be signs<sup>36</sup> to indicate seasons and days and years"

Margin notes:

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36 The text has 'for signs and for seasons and for days and years.' It seems likely from the meanings of the words involved that 'signs' is the main idea, followed by two categories, 'seasons' and 'days and years.' This is the simplest explanation, and one that matches v. 11-13. It could even be rendered 'signs for the fixed seasons, that is [explicative vav (ו)] days and years.'

"Let them be for signs. The point is that the sun and the moon were important to fix the days for the *seasonal celebrations for the worshipping community.*"

A study of the heavenly bodies reveals that the sun, moon, and stars are God's clock in the heavens. The heavenly bodies are the second, minute, and hour hands on God's universal time piece. In fact, this clock is so accurate that we can know exactly the time of day by where the sun is on the horizon. We can know what time of the month by the phase of the moon (one complete cycle of the moon: waxing to waning equal one Biblical month). We know what time of year by the sun's angle on the horizon and by the positioning of the different constellations we can see over head.

Genesis 1:14 explains God's purpose for the heavenly bodies: "let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years" The sun, moon, and stars are the movements of God's clock that He set in the heavens at creation. The watch you wear on your wrist is patterned after the movements of the earth around the sun. More sophisticated, astronomical clocks are based on the movements of the heavenly bodies as recorded in Genesis.

With astronomical clocks, you can tell exactly what time of year it is by the positioning of these heavenly bodies over head. This can be done anywhere on earth from whatever vantage point on earth you are at. At any given time of the year, you would be able to see certain constellations; this indicates what time of year it is. There is much already written on this subject that can be found online or at your local library, so I will not explain this further here.

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Psalms 104:19 reveals even more to us: “He appointed the moon for seasons.”

The moon has no effect on the seasons (spring, summer, fall and winter) as this is caused by the tilt of the axis of the earth. Instead, the moon affects the tides of the oceans as it rotates around the earth every 29-30 days. The word “seasons” in Psalms 104:19 is the same Hebrew word for “seasons” as seen in Genesis 1:14 (“moed” which means “feasts”).

Because “seasons” in Psalm 104:19 is the same word as in Genesis 1:14, we can now make some sense out of this. The moon is the second hand on God’s celestial clock and is used to set the timing for the feasts. Each time the moon begins a new cycle so, too, a new biblical month begins.

The waxing and waning of the moon determines the span of the month. The new month begins when the moon crescent is sighted (waxing) and ends at the disappearance of the moon (waning). This is how the timing of the feasts are calculated. The new moon marks off from the beginning of each Biblical month. Each appointed time is calculated from the new moon.

Leviticus 23 gives us a list of God’s appointed times:

1. **Sabbath** (Seventh day of the week)
  2. **Passover** is the 14th day after the first new moon of the year. It is not considered a Holy day but a preparation day for the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
  3. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** begins on the 15th day, at the close of the Passover day. The whole feast is seven days long and ends on the 21st day of the first month. The first and last days of the feast are considered Holy days. The day of Firstfruits follows the Sabbath during the feast of Unleavened Bread. Firstfruits is the day that Jesus rose on but is not a Holy day.
  4. **Pentecost** (Shavuot) falls 50 days after the day of Firstfruits and is a Holy day.
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5. **The Feast of Trumpets** (Rosh Hashanah) falls on the seventh new moon of the year and is a Holy day.
6. **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur) falls 10 days later (10th day of the seventh month) and is a Holy Day.
7. **Feast of Tabernacles** (Sukkot) is eight days long. It begins on the 15th day of the seventh month and ends on the 22nd day of the month. The first and the last days are Holy days.

It should be no surprise to anyone that the total number of annual Holy Days is seven; God has a plan. All of these appointed times (moed) are timed from the first new moon of the year and follow the moon cycle throughout the remainder of the year. Each feast falling on a specified day from a particular new moon.

Now we can see why God “*appointed* the moon for seasons” (moed or feasts). The moon is the second hand on His celestial clock which He set in the heavens at creation. Without the new moon it would be very difficult to know the exact timing of the festivals.

Now we will look at a few more pre-Sinai scriptures in which the festivals are alluded to.

### **Pentecost**

Most Bible Scholars recognize that the law was given from Mount Sinai on the Day of Pentecost. God chose Pentecost to give His law to His people. It is not clear why God waited until Pentecost to give His law, but I rather suspect that it has to do with the fact that without the Spirit of God, His law cannot be kept.

The giving of the Spirit is connected not only with Pentecost but also with obedience (Acts 2; 5:32). The Spirit of God was given, along with His law, to make obedience to the law possible.

“I will put my Spirit within you and *cause* you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezek 36:26-27).

We, as Seventh-day Adventists, are waiting for the prophesied outpouring of the Latter Rain. An understanding of Pentecost typology strongly suggests that this will happen on a Pentecost. The typical outpouring of the Latter Rain (Acts 2) happened on Pentecost, therefore the final outpouring (fulfillment) will also happen on a Pentecost. Remember these things are typical in event and also in time.

### **Passover**

The simplest example of the feasts pre-dating Sinai is Exodus 12 when the Israelites kept their first Passover as a nation.

In Exodus 12:40-41, we find that “the Sojourn of the children of Israel who had lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on the very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.”

This text indicates that their stay in Egypt began and ended on Passover. We need to recall that Jacob's (Israel's) flight into Egypt was his salvation from a desperate situation. Israel's salvation coming into Egypt and going from Egypt happened on Passover.

Passover carries with it salvation typology in regard to leaving a dire situation for a desired destination. This typology should not be overlooked as we look for the ultimate Passover fulfillment that Jesus talked about in Luke 22.

### **The Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles**

In Exodus 5:1 Moses tells Pharaoh: “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let My people go, that they may hold a *feast* to Me in the wilderness.’ ” There is no specific indication of which feast the LORD is referring to, but, considering the time setting of this text, we can make an educated guess as to which feast it would have been.

This request by Moses to hold a feast in the wilderness was made before any of the ten plagues fell in Egypt. The first three

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plagues were experienced by the Israelites and Egyptians and the last seven were poured out on those who did not accept God's provision for sin (Ex 8:22). This parallels the seven last plagues in the book of Revelation.

The seven last plagues of Revelation 16 are the fulfillment of a shadow event, which were the seven last plagues of Egypt. The plagues of Revelation 16 will be poured out immediately after the close of probation (the Day of Atonement experience in Revelation 15). It is logical to conclude that God poured out the plagues in Egypt after there was a judgment (Day of Atonement).

We must not lose sight of the fact that "all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11). Ellen White comments on the fulfillment of the festal calendar at the closing scenes of earth's history: "the types [plural] which relate to the Second Advent *must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic service*" (*Great Controversy*, p. 399).

Each of the feasts are typical of significant events of the plan of salvation. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the feast that Moses was speaking of was connected to the fall festivals that involve judgment (Trumpets or The Day of Atonement). There are six months between the fall festivals and Passover. From the Day of Atonement to Passover would be enough time for the seven last plagues to be poured out on the Egyptians. The possible implications in the book of Revelation as to the fulfillment of the festal calendar in regard to this timing should not be overlooked.

### **General festal reference**

"Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on *our* solemn feast day. For this is a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. This *He established in Joseph* for a testimony, when "he went through the land of Egypt" (Ps 81:3-5). Therefore, if it was a law of the God of Jacob (Joseph's father) to "Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day" then surely Jacob was also aware of the feasts. Blowing the trumpet on the New Moon was the

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announcement that the new month had begun; this was critical to know for the timing of the feasts. Both, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles began on the full moon; the trumpet was also blown at that time to announce the commencement of the feast. I think it would be safe to assume from this text that Joseph definitely knew about the festal calendar. If he knew about it, where did he learn of it? The text tells us that it was a law of the God of Jacob. Jacob would have taught his son, Joseph, about the laws of his God, which, according to this text included the feasts.

This text clearly states that the feasts predate Sinai, in this case, by approximately 400 years.

### **Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread**

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah may be connected to the timing of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Scripture indicates that on the night of Sodom's destruction, Lot "made them [the angels] a feast, and baked *unleavened bread*, and they ate" (Gen 19:3). Considering the typological meaning and the timing of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this is very logical.

Remember "all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11). Paul also tells us that these festivals "are a shadow of things to come" (Col 2:17). We are told in the book of Jude that the destruction of "Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are set forth as an example [type/shadow], suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (vs. 7).

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel's first Passover in Egypt including the judgement followed by the seven last plagues, the giving of the law on Pentecost at Mt. Sinai, and Pentecost in Acts 2 are all types of the fulfillments that are still in the future. These examples are types in event and also in time. I have only mentioned a few examples of many that are in the Bible.

There is actually more Biblical evidence that the feasts were kept by God's people before the giving of the law in Exodus than

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there is for the Sabbath. The Bible record indicates that right from the creation of this world God had a festal calendar. This calendar was laid out with special times of celebration of the goodness of God and for God to be with His people in an intimate way. After the fall of man, additional meanings were attached to the feasts just as the Sabbath. The festivals are typical of future ultimate fulfillments, not only as to the events, but also the timing of those events.

## Relevant Ellen White Quotes

“There are *old, yet new* truths still to be added to the treasures of our knowledge” (*Review and Herald*, Feb 25, 1890).

“There are *glorious truths to come* before the people of God. *Privileges and duties* which *they do not even suspect* to be *in the Bible* will be laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God’s will, they will know more and more of the oracles of God, and be established in *right doctrines*” (*That I May Know Him*, p. 114).

“Christ had many truths to give to his disciples, of which he could not speak, because they did not advance with the light that was flashed upon Levitical laws and the sacrificial offerings. They did not accept the light, advance with the light, and follow on to still greater brightness as Providence should lead the way. And for the same reason, Christ’s disciples of 1898 do not comprehend important matters of truth. So dull has been the comprehension even of those who teach the truth to others, that many things cannot be opened to them until they reach heaven. This ought not to be. But as men’s minds become narrow, they think they know all, when they have only a glimpse of truth. They close their minds, as if there were no more for them to learn; and should the Lord attempt to lead them on, they would not accept the increased light. They cling to the spot where they see light, when that which they see is only a glimmer of the bright beams they might enjoy. They know very little of what it means to follow in the footsteps of Christ.

“In their harmonious relation, the truths of Scripture are like links in a chain. Just as fast as our minds are quickened by the Spirit of God to comprehend light, and in humbleness appropriate it, we shall dispense it to others, and give the glory back to God. The development of truth is the reward of the humble-hearted seeker who will fear of God, and walk with him. The truth which the mind grasps as truth is capable of constant expansion and new development. While we behold it, the truth is revealed in all its bearings in the life and character, and becomes more clear, and

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certain, and beautiful. The mind that grasps it in its preciousness becomes elevated, ennobled, sanctified.

“Far, very far, are human minds from grasping the teachings of Christ. These are old truths in new settings. *The entire system of Judaism was the gospel veiled.* Those who will not consider are like the Jews. It is humbling to their dignity and pride to work the mines of truth. But *the Light of the world is sending his divine rays to illuminate the entire Jewish economy,* and the minds that have been accepting the sayings of men as the commandments of God are to be educated to look to God himself, the author of all truth. . .

“Very many teachers are content with a supposition in regard to the truth. They have crude ideas, and are content with a surface work in searching for truth, taking for granted that they have all that is essential. They take the sayings of others for truth, being too indolent to put themselves to diligent, earnest labor, represented in the Word as digging for hidden treasure. But man's inventions are not only unreliable; they are dangerous; for they place man where God should be. They place the sayings of men where a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ should be. The world's Redeemer alone possesses the key to unlock the treasure-house of the Old Testament. He explores hidden things. He separates the precious truth from superstition and error and the devisings and imaginings of men.

“Sharp, clear perceptions of truth will never be the reward of indolence. Investigation of every point that has been received as truth will richly repay the searcher; he will find precious gems. And in closely investigating every jot and tittle which we think is established truth, in comparing scripture with scripture, *we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture.* Christ would have the searcher of his word sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth. If the search is properly conducted, jewels of inestimable value will be found. The word of God is the mine of the unsearchable riches of Christ” (*Review and Herald*, July 12, 1898 paragraph, 10-15).

There are many similar statements in the writings of Ellen White. There is something in the above quotation that we need to understand correctly. Ellen White never claimed to be 100 percent

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correct on every point of her understanding of Scripture. I ask that you prayerfully read the previous statement again and apply the “we” and “our” to include Ellen White, because that is what she has done. The implications of this quotation are as deep as the Word of God. She understood that by “*closely investigating every point . . . which we think is established truth . . . we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture*”. This is a hard saying; nevertheless, it must be stated. If we would heed Christ’s counsel, and “*sink the shaft deeper into the mines of truth . . . jewels of inestimable value will be found.*” “*If the search is properly conducted*” “*we may discover errors in our interpretation of Scripture.*” Please, consider these things.

“The slaying of the Passover lamb was a shadow of the death of Christ. Says Paul, ‘Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us’ (1 Cor 5:7). The sheaf of first-fruits, which at the time of the Passover was waved before the Lord, was typical of the resurrection of Christ. Paul says, in speaking of the resurrection of the Lord, and of all his people, ‘Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming’ (1 Cor 15:23). Like the wave-sheaf, which was the first ripe grain gathered before the harvest, Christ is the first-fruits of that immortal harvest of redeemed ones that at the future resurrection shall be gathered into the garner of God.

“These types were fulfilled, *not only as to the event, but as to the time*. On the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, the very day and month on which, for fifteen long centuries, the Passover lamb had been slain, Christ, having eaten the Passover with his disciples, instituted that feast which was to commemorate his own death as ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ That same night he was taken by wicked hands, to be crucified and slain. And as the antitype of the wave-sheaf, our Lord was raised from the dead on the third day, ‘the first-fruits of them that slept’ (1 Cor 15:20). A sample [type] of all the resurrected just, whose “vile body” shall be changed, and ‘fashioned like unto his glorious body’ (Phil 3:21).

“In like manner, the types [plural] which relate to the Second Advent ***must be fulfilled at the time*** pointed out in the symbolic service” (*Great Controversy*, p. 399).

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The fulfillment of both spring and fall types are seen in the book of Revelation. Most people are totally unaware of this fact because it has only come to light recently. This is due to a renewed interest and study into “the feasts of the LORD” as listed in Leviticus 23.

The sanctuary service is two dimensional – events and time. It portrays salvation events as well as a time table for them. The fall types (the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles) did not meet their fulfillment at the first coming of Jesus because they relate to the second coming. Therefore, according to good logic, Ellen White states they “*must be fulfilled at the time*” pointed out in the symbolic service” just as the spring “types were fulfilled, *not only as to the event, but as to the time*” (GC p. 399).

Therefore, these sacred times do have a purpose for the last day church. God’s last day church will realize the ultimate fulfillment of these feasts not only as to the event but as to the time appointed on God’s calendar.

These Ellen White quotations are not to prove that the Feasts are relevant for today’s church. These quotations involve principles that are unchangeable; in fact, the reformation was built on these principles; truth is ever unfolding.

I believe Ellen White did not totally understand the subject of the feasts. It may be possible God chose not to reveal the feasts to Ellen White in their entirety because He was saving this for a generation not yet born; the last generation. The feasts may be another piece in the process of restoring all things. For this reason I have learned not to rely on Ellen White as the final expositor of all truth. We must be able to sustain all of our teachings from the Word of God and the Word of God only. I believe this to be in accordance with her will.

## New Light or New Truth?

There is need for clarification of the two terms '*new light*' and '*new truth*'. These two terms can be used interchangeably, however sometimes these terms are used incorrectly. First, let us look at the term '*new light*'. One may have looked at something in scripture several times without comprehending it, and, out of nowhere, it would seem, they begin to receive understanding. This is one of the ways that the Spirit of God works. The individual may think that this understanding is new light. However, while it may be new light to the individual, this does not make it new light. New light, by definition, is something that has not been previously understood by anyone.

There are some who have chosen to adopt the festal calendar into their lives; believing it will bring a better understanding of God and the plan of salvation. This was God's original purpose for the feasts, and therefore, to celebrate the feasts would bring glory to God. However, the feasts should not be considered as new light or new truth if one believes the early Christian church taught these things. What we are really dealing with here is something that has been lost sight of for many generations, just as was the Sabbath. While the Sabbath was new truth to the pioneers of the Adventist Church, it was not technically new truth. It was an old truth that was new to our pioneers.

Ellen White understood this concept well when she made these statements:

"There are *old, yet new* truths still to be added to the treasures of our knowledge" (*Review and Herald*, Feb 25, 1890).

"There are glorious truths to come before the people of God. *Privileges and duties* which they do not even suspect to be *in the Bible* will be laid open before the followers of Christ (*That I May Know Him*, p. 114).

A good example of new truth would be the prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation. It is quite clear from scripture that

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Daniel and John did not fully understand the things they wrote. "Although I heard I did not understand" (Dan 12:8). These things were to be understood in "the time of the end." "But you, Daniel shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; and many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Dan 12:4). According to the context, the knowledge that is to increase is an understanding of Daniel's prophecies.

Therefore, the understanding of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in the time of the end is rightly considered new light. These prophecies have been studied by many throughout history; however, there has been little understanding. The understanding of these books was not to come "until the time of the end."

A good example of a teaching that should not be considered new truth is the state of the dead. Our pioneers came to understand this truth early on in their experience. The state of the dead was new truth to them, but it was not actually new, because this doctrine was understood and taught by the apostolic church. As with the feasts, the understanding of this truth in the time of the end is a part of the restoration of "all things" that Jesus talked about. These truths were held by the early church, but were lost as the Catholic Church ascended to power during the 4<sup>th</sup> century A. D. and beyond. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the reformation began the process of restoring all things.

In some circles the feasts are considered new light and new truth, however, by definition, they are not. The early Christian church had an understanding of them as far as celebrating them and their typological meaning. However, there are teachings in the feasts that are new. For example; some are studying how the festivals apply to our present understanding of the books of Daniel and Revelation. When the festal system is blended with the books of Daniel and Revelation; these two books become clearer, and new light is shed on our present understanding of them.

# Conclusion

As we come to the end of this study it is my hope that you have seen enough evidence to warrant a deeper investigation of this subject. Each of us must draw our own conclusion. So, now let's look at what have we established in our study.

We have found no Scriptural evidence that God's original purpose for the feasts was fulfilled and therefore done away with by nailing them to the cross. The evidence has been to the contrary: God's original purpose for the feasts has not been fulfilled, and they were not nailed to the cross.

We have found abundant evidence in Scripture and in the writings of Ellen White to prove that the fulfillment for most of the festal calendar is still future.

If we can agree that these two statements are true, then:

- It is not safe for us to take the position that there is no relevance for them in our lives today.
  - Since type (shadow) has not met antitype (fulfillment) we are still living in the "shadow of things to come" (Col 2:17).
  - Because we are still in the shadows, there is still much to be gained by keeping the feasts as we try to understand their future fulfillments.
  - We will see that God is still speaking to us today through the festal system to help us understand these future fulfillments.
  - Since the types were given in the past and the fulfillments for them are still in the future, can we come to any other conclusion than that there continues to be a purpose for them in the present?
  - As students of Scripture it is our responsibility to understand how they apply to us today.
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This concept of future fulfillments may be new to some readers. However, these ultimate fulfillments are the strongest evidence that there remains a purpose for the feasts today.

Jesus did not come to change the religion that He had given, but came to change the minds of those who changed that religion.

“Think not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law *till all is fulfilled*” (Matt 5:17-18).

Jesus came to fill with meaning the religion that He had originally given. An understanding of the feasts gives a full understanding of the ministry and work of our Savior. This teaching in the feasts brings Jesus to the front and center, making Him the substance of the feasts.

We have examined the purposes for which God originally gave the feasts and found that they are all still applicable to us today. In our shrinking world of high speed connections, what we lack is a basic connection with God, family, and friends. These feasts were designed to supply this need.

We have examined Scriptural evidence that the feasts continued to be an integral part of church life throughout the New Testament and into the fourth century. It was at this time that the Catholic Church completed the change from the Biblical Sabbath to their counterfeit sabbath. It was with the same stroke of the pen that they replaced God's festivals with its own festivals such as Christmas and Easter.

History bears the testimony that the Sabbath and the feasts were kept by pockets of Christians from New Testament times until now. We have also seen clear Biblical evidence that the feasts will be kept in the new earth. With festal celebrations in the past and in the future, it is logical to conclude that they have true meaning and purpose for us today.

We have considered Ellen White's position on the feasts and found that she wrote about them in a positive manner and not

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once does she indicate that we should not keep them. She does not say that the feasts were nailed to the cross. She has a chapter dedicated to the feasts of the Lord in her book "*Patriarchs and Prophets*" entitled "The Annual Feasts." This chapter is well worth reading.

She agrees with Paul, in Colossians 2:17, where he says the feasts are "a shadow of things to come" (future). In *Acts of the Apostles* she writes: "the whole system of types and symbols was a compacted prophecy of the gospel, a presentation in which were bound up the promises of redemption. (p. 14). The feasts are a "compacted prophecy of gospel" from beginning to end. She also wrote that the festal "types which relate to the second advent *must* be fulfilled *at the time* pointed out in the symbolic service" (*Great Controversy*, p. 399).

The gospel did not end at the cross; all is not fulfilled. We are still in the shadows of the future festal fulfillments. By faith, as we partake of the festal types, we see and experience their fulfillments afar off. Celebrating the feasts brings reality to our faith. When these festal celebrations are experienced in the context of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, is doing, and will do for us in the future, the gospel becomes extremely clear. The gospel is the Good News that the festal calendar will be fulfilled.

The feasts are not only typical in event but also typical in time. This is an extremely important point considering the feasts meet their ultimate fulfillment in the book of Revelation. After studying all Ellen White has written on the feasts, it is clear that God in His revealing of all truth did not reveal the subject of the feasts to Ellen White in its entirety. It appears He opened the door through her for others to enter.

"All should be careful about presenting new views of Scripture before they have given these points thorough study, and are fully prepared to sustain them from the Bible. Introduce nothing that will cause dissension, without clear evidence that in it God is giving a special message for this time" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 106).

My personal conclusion is that the festivals would serve a positive purpose for God's church today. That purpose would be

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the same as His original purpose as put forward in the chapter entitled "God's purpose for the Feasts".

Brothers and sisters, the question I continue to battle with is precisely this: is this the time?

The age old adage that "timing is everything" could not be more appropriate in this case. I believe God's providential clock is indicating the time is now.

If we approach this subject with an open mind and a willing heart, I am sure that our duty and privilege concerning this matter will become clear. Jesus promised, "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine. . ." (John 7:17).

It just might be that the hand of the One whose timing knows no haste and no delay has something to show us just when we need it most. There are many Seventh-day Adventists and others from various faiths that are coming to these same conclusions. It used to be that Seventh-day Adventists were foremost in leading the world to present truth, but now there are many voices declaring the way.

If this is new light to us, should we be afraid of it because it may be controversial? In the past, it would seem that new understandings of Scripture have always been controversial.

There is a principle in Luke 6:39: "And *no one*, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says '*the old wine is better.*'" What Jesus is saying here is new teachings are not readily accepted because most people are comfortable with what they already know. Also, we are afraid that we might be led astray, so we decide to stay with the old.

Yes, we must be careful, but at the same time not so careful that we will not even investigate something because it's new or because we do not want to believe it. If it is false, a thorough search will reveal it; if it is true, will we follow the light?

"There are glorious truths to come before the people of God. Privileges and duties which they do not even suspect to be in the

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Bible will be laid open before the followers of Christ. As they follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, they will know more and more of the oracles of God, and be established in right doctrines" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 114).

We, as Seventh-day Adventists, realize a special work has been given to us: that is to give "The Elijah Message." A message, which according to Jesus; "will restore all things" (Matt 17:11). Elijah's message was to call people back to true worship as God ordained it, that included coming back to "the commandments of the LORD" (1 Kings 18:18). The message of the three angel's in Revelation 14 begins with a call to true worship.

Malachi 4:4-5 gives us a glimpse of those who at the end of time would be giving the Elijah message: "*Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.* Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."

Notice that this call is back to the Ten Commandments as well as the statutes and judgments, which includes the feasts.

Is it possible that we are so busy that we will not take the time to investigate what God may be showing us today? Are we willing to ignore the blessings that He has in store for us?

So often we ask questions like: Why did Adam and Eve listen to the serpent and sin against God? If that was me back then, what would I have done? And when Eve fell, how was it that Adam chose to listen to his wife instead of the Word of God? I surely would not have done that. How was it that the Jews were blinded to the identity of Jesus? What would I have done if I walked in Israel at the time of Christ, would I have accepted this new teacher? We truly are not good at dealing with what-ifs because we do not really know ourselves. The fact is, if we were there we would have very likely run with the crowd. You might be saying "no I would not have, I am part of God's true church." Please consider this is what the people in Israel thought also.



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How was it for the early New Testament church? The church/nation (Israel) they were brought up in had taught that they had it all; all favor and all truth. But, all of a sudden a challenge was presented; there was more to the story. What would I have done? What would you have done? We know the price they paid for accepting these new teachings; we read about it in the book of Acts. However, do we understand what they went through? Do we really understand the mental gymnastics they would have done? I do not believe we do. If you converted to Seventh-day Adventism from another church, then you have a very small glimpse of what it was like for them.

What about the early pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church? They were a part of church life in their different denominations when “. . . a cry was heard: behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!” (Matt 25:6). What was this new teaching that drew a line in the sand? These people heard the truth of the second coming of Jesus. I can well imagine this caused no small stir in their churches. Four classes of people were revealed for what they really stood for:

1. The leadership for the most part would not be moved by these new teachings. The cost was more than they could bear. So they confirmed their congregations in their present understanding of Scripture. They used the writings of the church fathers as proof for why this new teaching should not be accepted. “Do not get involved with these people, they will lead you astray,” was the message from these ministers.
2. Those who were curious but stayed with the decision of the leadership because they were content with leaving the interpretation of the Word of God to their leaders because after all, they were trained in the Word. I do not like to say this, but the truth of the matter is: if someone else will do our homework for us, why would we do it for ourselves? They were content with leaving their salvation in the hands of others.

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3. There were also those who joined with those who taught these new ideas but did not settle into them by digging into the Word. These, after time fell away because their roots did not go deep into the soil.
4. And finally, there were those who would not leave their salvation in the hands of any person. These people took these matters to the Word of God; comparing Scripture with Scripture. These people “were more fair-minded” and “Searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). The battle cry of the reformation was their motto: “*The Bible and the Bible only*” (*Great Controversy*, p. 336).

The challenge before us is to answer this question: What would I have done in all these preceding examples? What would you have done? Friend, whoever you are, whatever your position; a teacher in Israel or a church mouse, consider this question carefully; “What would you have done?”

Let’s take this challenge to the next level. The way you and I respond to this new teaching on the feasts is how we would have responded to new understanding of Scripture in any age. How are you responding? Please do not allow your feelings in this matter make your decision. Use your God given powers to search His Word, pleading with Him for knowledge of the truth. I am not suggesting the Seventh-day Adventist church has apostatized or any such thing. All I am saying is that we must recognize that if God has chosen us to bring truth to a dying world full of dying people, who are we to edit the truth? If He has some “*old, yet new truths*” to show us, let’s not be like the other churches that have come and gone before us.

You might be thinking, if this teaching on the feasts is true, our prophet would have told us. Ellen White was an instrument in the hand of God, doing the work that was set before her in the restoration of “all things.” God used her, inspired her, led her, even gave her visions, but please, she was not the end of the story. It was Joseph Bates (a layperson) who influenced James and Ellen White to accept the Sabbath truth. This was after she had received

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visions from God. She never claimed to know and understand all that was necessary from the Word of God.

God still uses ordinary people like you and me. And at times, if need be, to bring truth to those who might already think they have all the truth. Ellen White's primary role was to point the church back to the Word of God. If we will but go to the Word of God and compare Scripture with Scripture, we will find that all the prophets taught these truths. That is where we need to go, to the Scriptures.

In the process of the reformation God revealed truth in a calculated manner: one thing at a time over a long period of time. Most of the truths of the reformation were not new at all, they were old truths buried beneath the rubble of fable, and tradition. God in His mercy; gave people time to search out what was truth on a certain matter, and then He gave time for adjustments in their lives, families, and churches. As things were accepted and practiced He would again reveal new yet old truths and the process would begin over.

This was His plan for the reformation; this was and is His plan for the Seventh-day Adventist church. At what point does someone decide we are in possession of all the truth that is needed. This systematic unfolding of truth is not complete until God decides it is complete. This is when "*all things*" will have been restored.

During the reformation, when a new truth (something they had not considered before) was presented, should they have been surprised that their church leaders in previous generations did not see these truths in their day? No, God has always been unfolding truth from age to age, from generation to generation. If God is revealing truth today, for the purpose of restoring it, should we be surprised that our church leaders in past generations did not see these things? No, by definition, if something is being restored, that means it has been lost, which also means previous generations did not see it, however committed to the truth they were. This is why we cannot make the writings of those who have come and gone the standard for measuring what is and is not truth. For this reason we must go back to the Word of God when we hear something new. It may be that whatever it is that is new is only

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new to us. Please consider this, if we do not understand this concept, we do not really understand the reformation.

Ellen White understood this concept when she penned: "There are glorious truths to come [future] before the people of God [that is us]. Privileges and duties which they [we] do not even suspect to be in the Bible will be laid open before the followers of Christ [us]. As they [we] follow on in the path of humble obedience, doing God's will, they [we] will know more and more of the oracles of God, and be established in right doctrines" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 114). She understood; she was not the end of the story. Through her writings Ellen White still points to the Word of God for the end of the story. She never claimed knowledge of all truth.

Each of us began this study with our own preconceived ideas. So now we must answer the question: Are those preconceived ideas according to Scripture? We must not allow our preconceived ideas and traditional thinking dictate to us what the Bible says. We must, "Test all things, hold fast what is good" (1 Thess 5:21). I am appealing to all who read this book to heed the cry of the reformation and go to "*The Bible, and the Bible only*," to see if these things are so.

You may be asking these two questions:

1. What would celebrating the feasts do for me?
2. If I decided to celebrate the feasts, how would I do it?

For me to tell you what celebrating the festivals would do for you is impossible. What I can tell you is what they have done for me. I have been blessed in several ways.

I have:

1. Come to a deeper and broader understanding of the Plan of Salvation.
  2. A healthier appreciation of what God has done, is doing, and what He is going to do for me and His people.
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3. A greater faith experience as I contemplate salvation history and as I look to the future festal fulfillments.
4. Connected with the rich heritage of the Israel of old and have come to a fuller comprehension of the Spiritual Israel of today.
5. There are other blessings such as being able to spend more time with God, making new friends, understanding the books of Daniel and Revelation better, etc. However, to be completely honest as to what the festivals have done for me, I must add that celebrating the festivals has not always been pleasant. At times, in my experience, there have been people that have tried to turn these blessings into cursings. How? By the negative way they have treated me, because, I have chosen to celebrate the feasts. I am glad to say, I have not been deterred by people who do not understand my experience with My God.

Now to the question; what would you do to celebrate the feasts? I came into the Adventist Church from Catholicism, the Sabbath was a major change in my life, as I adopted the Sabbath into my life; its purpose, and its blessings became clear. Keeping the Sabbath with those who had already been keeping it was a tremendous blessing in my understanding of it. It is not my purpose to prescribe the method that you might celebrate the feasts. Find someone you know that has been keeping the feasts and experience the feasts with them. Just remember, Jesus should be the focal point in these celebrations. The feasts lose their luster when they are done in a legalistic way, just as does the Sabbath. There are many sites on the internet; I encourage you to explore them, to get some ideas. You may not be aware of it but there are Seventh-day Adventist churches that celebrate the feasts. They can and should be a resource.

My sincere desire is that the feasts do not become a point of controversy but a point of study. The more people study this subject, the more likely that God's Spirit will win out on whether we will collectively understand what is truth and what is not. May God

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give us the energy, strength, desire, and love to “go for broke” for Him.

Please, if you have time to respond, I would gladly receive your response.

Sincerely in Christ,

Tom Stapleton

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**Notes**