

Do Christians Follow Holy Days?

By Elder David Pyles

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. – Col 2:16-17

Some people think it is Christians duty to practice the holy days under the Old Testament Law. This seems to be a growing opinion. The above scripture shows that such is not the case. The text says Christians are not to be distinguished by diet, holy days, new moons, etc. It further explains that all these things in the Law pointed forward to Christ and had their fulfillment in Him. This being the case, they are to be done away as part of formal church practice. Instead, the duty of the church is to teach their *meaning* for purposes of establishing Christian doctrine.

Since Christianity is a religion of liberty, a person can of course choose his own diet and can even observe holidays (Rom 14), but he is not at liberty to make these things a part of church practice. When the Galatians attempted such, Paul objected, saying, “*Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain,*” (Gal 4:10-11). Paul considered such behavior as being symptomatic of a misunderstanding of what Christianity is truly about. This is why he expressed fear concerning the Galatians. As he said elsewhere, “*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,*” (Rom 14:17).

These Law practices have neither precept nor precedent in the New Testament and were actually opposed by it. Several attempts were made by misguided Christians in that era to modify the church by adding various provisions of the Law. In particular, they attempted to add circumcision, racial distinctions, dietary restrictions, holy days, Sabbath days, new moons and works-based salvation (deriving from a misunderstanding of the Law). In not a single instance was any such attempt approved by the Apostles. This has important implications. If God disallowed modifications deriving from the Law, one can be sure He will not approve our own uninspired ideas about how to improve His church. The Bible takes the position that New Testament Christianity is the culmination and perfection of the plan of God for worship. Any

modification that man might make to it can only serve to degrade it. *“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God,”* (Heb 7:19).

Christ taught the same ideas in Mt 9:14-17 when He was challenged with questions about fasting. In His reply He said, *“No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved,”* (Mt 9:16-17). By this Jesus meant it was not His intent to merely patch up or amend the Law. He came to give a new system. It was a new garment, or new wine in its own new bottle. This new system would have higher standards and would therefore meet the demands of the Law without actually following it. God the Father also taught this principle on the Mount of Transfiguration. Christ there appeared with the two leading figures of the Law, Moses and Elijah. When Peter proposed building tabernacles to honor all three, God replied, *“This is my beloved Son: hear him,”* (Mk 9:7). Thus we were clearly and convincingly told that we are to follow nothing but Jesus. Moses and Elijah do the same.

Besides, the Apostles described the Law as being a composite unit that cannot be accepted or rejected in parts (Gal 3:10, 5:3-4, Rom 7:1-4, 11:6, Js 2:10). One must practice all of it or else be in violation of the whole. If one is going to take the holy days from the Law, then they are also obligated to take its sacrifices, circumcision, etc. The same principle is true of Jesus. He never gave anyone the option of being a quarter-disciple or half-disciple. The Law and Jesus are things that must be taken in whole, meaning they cannot be taken together as rules of worship practice.

This does not imply that the Old Testament is to be cast aside. Paul said, *“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith,”* (Gal 3:24). The Old Testament is still to be used for purposes of teaching Christ. It is important that the meaning of rites, ceremonies, holy days, etc. under the Law be taught, but we are not to persist in practicing them now that Christ has fulfilled their intent and meaning.

It has been a dependable rule of Christian history that anything man adds for purposes of supplementing what God commanded will eventually be substituted for it. This was the type of error that Jesus denounced in the Pharisees, saying, *“Full well ye reject the*

commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition,” (Mk 7:9). Unauthorized additions to what God commanded will almost invariably become distractions, and men will become preoccupied with them and forget or neglect the actual commandments of God. God has commanded all Christians with duties sufficient to keep them busy. We should stay focused on these rather than trying to improve upon His plan for the church.