



"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

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Mini Study

Festivals - We Need Them!

'When you and your family arrive, spend the money on food for a big celebration. Buy cattle, sheep, goats, wine, beer, and if there are any other kinds of food that you want, buy those too' (Deut 14:26 CEV).

...God will bless everyone who is invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb... (Revelation 19:9 CEV).

Most of us like to celebrate: birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, a new home or job. Such events punctuate what can be the routine of daily life. Religion, too, has moments of festivity - whether Hinduism, Islam or Christianity. For the most part, each celebration has significance.

- It's human nature to 'party,' and from earliest times, mankind has marked important events by varying degrees of feasting - and, sometimes, sacrifice. Anciently, and even today! - such festivals were an excuse for serious over-indulgence, as was in the Roman Saturnalia held towards the end of December.
- The Messiah, Jesus, was pleased to enjoy feasting. Throughout His earthly life, together with His family, He annually observed a series of festivals where (except one - a fast) there was feasting and rejoicing along with His like-minded compatriots. Jews (Jesus was one), throughout Judaea and the Roman Empire, gathered annually in Jerusalem to observe the festivals appointed by God. They are listed in Leviticus ch 23, and their observance is chronicled throughout the Scriptures.
- These festivals were accompanied by feasting and joyous celebration. Nehemiah (5th Century BC) addressed some festival-goers: *'...then he said to them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord: neither be you grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength'* (Nehemiah 8:10 ASV). That was the Feast of Trumpets. Moses adds, regarding another of God's festivals (Tabernacles): *'And thou shall eat before Jehovah thy God, in the place which He shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, the tithe of thy grain, of thy new wine, and of thy oil, and the firstlings of thy herd and of thy flock; that thou mayest learn to fear Jehovah thy God always'* (Deuteronomy 14: 23 ASV).
- Notice that God even introduced a 'savings plan' - a portion of income - to enable enjoyable observance of His festivals. Not selfish over-indulgence - as 'portions' were given to the needy for them to observe them.
- The first Christians - both Jew and Gentile - followed the example of Jesus in observing these days. As an example, the (Gentile) Corinthian church is recorded as observing the Days of Unleavened Bread (I Corinthians 5) - a seven-day spring festival. Numerous Christians around the world observe them to this day.
- The festivals appointed by God - they are *'the feasts of the LORD,'* not of Moses (Leviticus 23:2) - are in part an outline of the divine plan for mankind. Included in that plan is the thousand-year reign of Jesus. It will be

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a time of superabundance and is fittingly represented by feasting on earth's products during the festivals (Amos 9:13-15).

- Feasting, of course, is not the essence of God's festivals. Said Jesus: '*But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers*' (John 4:23). The focus of God's festivals for Christians is their historical, present and prophetic significance. It's a time when the people of God gather primarily for fellowship, celebration and Bible instruction, yet at the same time enjoying and sharing God's material blessings in a restrained manner at the times of the year He, not man, has appointed.
- Yet, for most believers, these seven Biblical festivals have been replaced by a series of ersatz festivals - unknown except as observances by their pagan neighbors - by Jesus and His apostles, and by the early church. They engulfed the apostate church a couple of centuries after the death of the apostles, but have roots in ancient pre-Christian practices.
- These non-Biblical festivals, especially Christmas, have become an excuse for over-indulgence with merely a nod (if that) towards either their non-Biblical origin or their real significance - or to what the Scriptures teach us. How much more satisfying to '*...follow the Lamb wherever He goes*' - no matter what the world thinks or celebrates. Enjoyment of the good bounty of God is a positive benefit. Celebrate - but at times and in ways that He has instructed.

Request the booklet *God's Holy Days* and the article *A Framework for Prophecy*

(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted.)

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