

**Why Christians Shouldn't Keep**  
**The Feasts of Israel**  
Jon Tandy, 3/13/2012

There are some within various Messianic and Christian groups, as well as among Restoration believers who advocate and practice keeping the Biblical feasts of Israel, observing Saturday as the Lord's Sabbath, and certain other aspects of the law of Moses. While this author is sympathetic to a few of the reasons for such practices, and I consider it important to understand and know something about the Old Testament laws, it is a grave mistake to consider old covenant practices to be a necessary part of Christian worship under the new covenant.

This paper discusses some of the reasons advocated for the importance of observing the Jewish feasts and other ordinances. It is shown that the Mosaic Law with all its performances and ordinances have been entirely replaced by the ordinances of the new covenant. Requiring observance to the old covenant, as if this were a more spiritual or righteous practice, is contrary to scriptures and the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Contents:

Reasons for learning and keeping the feasts .....	2
Why we shouldn't keep the feasts .....	3
The Law was only given because of hardness of heart.....	3
The Law is bondage.....	4
The Law is Dead.....	6
Animal sacrifices were required under the Law .....	6
Christ fulfilled the Law, no more animal sacrifices.....	7
All "performances and ordinances" done away, not just sacrifices.....	7
A new marriage covenant established, in place of the old.....	9
The Law is not perpetual.....	11
The Law was taken away, and done away with.....	12
Other laws done away.....	14
Sabbath observance under the new covenant.....	14
Food is not to be forbidden .....	16
Tithing Transformed .....	16
Priesthood Changed .....	17
Is it reasonable to keep only part of the law?.....	17
Are we denying Christ by keeping the Law? .....	18
How then should we keep the feasts? .....	21
Passover .....	21
Pentecost (Feast of Weeks).....	22
Feast of Tabernacles .....	22
Day of Atonement.....	23
Summary .....	24
Appendix A: Why keep Hanukkah vs. Christmas? .....	25
Appendix B: Phases of the Law.....	26

## **Reasons for learning and keeping the feasts**

Before discussing why Christians shouldn't keep the feasts of Israel, it would be fair to give some reasons why it could be beneficial to learn about the feasts, and perhaps even to keep them.

The feasts of Israel, along with all the law of Moses, was given to be a type and shadow of Christ (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; Heb 10:1; Mos 1:110-111; Mos 8:7-8,90). All of the Old Testament sacrifices point to Christ, and learning about them may provide valuable insights into the Christian faith. In several places throughout the New Testament, in particular the book of Hebrews, there are many direct and indirect references to the Old Testament laws and ordinances that are used to explain aspects of the gospel of Christ.

The Old Testament laws concerning the feasts also state that those laws were to be perpetual ordinances to the house of Israel.

Regarding all weekly Sabbaths, "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Exod 31:16)

Concerning the Passover, it is said, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever" (Exod 12:14).

Concerning the feast of Pentecost: "it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations" (Lev 23:21).

Of the feast of Tabernacles, it is said: "Ye shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (Lev 23:31).

Regarding the Day of Atonement: "it shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute forever...and this shall be an everlasting statute unto you..." (Lev 16:31,34).

The feasts of Israel are special sabbaths within the Mosaic system. In addition to these, the keeping of the regular (Saturday) sabbaths is commanded in the law (Exod 20:8-11; Exod 31:13-17; Lev 16:29-31; Lev 23:3,27-36,41; Deut 5:12-15; Isa 56:2-6; Isa 58:13).

For those believers in the Messiah who consider themselves to be the true house of Israel, it could be argued that we ought to keep those feasts and sabbaths which were declared to be perpetual to the house of Israel. The scriptural injunctions against breaking these sabbaths are stern; for instance, "whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people" (Lev 23:29).

There are some Old Testament indications also that in the last days the feasts will be kept. In the oft-quoted scripture from Psalm 51 concerning the sacrifices of "a broken heart and a contrite heart," it goes on to say, "Do good in thy pleasure unto Zion; build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar" (Psa 51:18-19).

Isaiah 56 says of the Gentiles who accept the Lord, “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, everyone that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isa 56:6-8). This indicates that Gentiles would be brought into the Hebrew covenants, and thus offer sacrifices according to the Law. In Ezekiel’s vision of the temple (Ezek 40-47), which is generally held to be a last days prophecy, it is said that the priests will offer sacrifices (44:11; 46:24).

Zechariah 14 describes the last days redemption of Zion and the coming of Christ. It includes this prophecy: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain... This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech 14:16-21).

### **Why we shouldn’t keep the feasts**

However compelling the above reasons may seem, there are good reasons to believe that the arguments put forward are seriously mistaken. The feasts of Israel were part of the rituals of God’s covenant with the nation of Israel which were fulfilled and done away in Christ, and are no longer part of God’s law for Christians to keep. For Christians to go back and try to bring in parts of the old covenant brings confusion within the body of Christ and does no honor to Christ, and in some ways denies the very redemption that He came to bring.

### **The Law was only given because of hardness of heart**

The Law of Moses was only given because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews. The prophet Jeremiah wrote that God didn’t originally command the people to keep the physical ordinances of the Law of Moses, but simply called them to obey the voice of their God, but they hardened their hearts against Him (Jere 7:21-24). The 19th chapter of Exodus illustrates this, as God promised to make a covenant with them, and the people vowed to do everything the Lord said (Exod 19:5-8). Yet, when the Lord called them to come up the mountain to meet Him, they refused to come up (Exod 20:18-21; Heb 12:18-25).

The prophet Abinadi wrote that “it was expedient that there should be a law given to the children of Israel, yea, even a very strict law: for they were a stiff-necked people: quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God; therefore there was a law given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly, from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God, and their duty towards him” (Mos 8:6-7).

Paul wrote in Galatians that “before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster until Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ” (Gal 3:23-26).

If the Law of Moses was given to the Israelites simply because they were hard-hearted and unwilling to follow the commandments of God, why would we want to keep it today? What does it say about our hearts, if we are asking to be brought back under the schoolmaster?

### **The Law is bondage**

Not only was the Law of Moses given for a disobedient people – the Law is a bondage to its adherents. Paul makes this argument very clearly in Galatians 4:21-31. “Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise.” Paul is relating the covenant of the Law of Moses, with its commandments and ordinances, to the bondwoman, Hagar (or “Agar”).

He goes on to state that these things “are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which as Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all....Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.”

Paul’s message to the Galatians was specifically directed toward those who wished to bring Christians under the requirements of keeping the law, in particular the law of circumcision that was required as a religious practice for all Israelites. Paul’s words against this are strong: “Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.”

If you were a Jew, this statement is hugely significant. Paul is saying that your insistence on adhering to the old law is analogous with being Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman; rather than Isaac, the true son of Abraham and of the promise through faith.

Paul continues this line of reasoning in chapter 5. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal 5:1) – that is, the bondage of keeping the performances of the Law. “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised [that is, one who is required to be circumcised in order to keep the Law of Moses], that he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal 5:2-3).

In Paul's day, the issue was circumcision. The Jewish Christians wanted to require the Gentile Christians to be circumcised as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, which became part of the Law of Moses. Recall that the law of circumcision went clear back to Abraham, predating the Law: "thou [Abraham] and thy seed after thee, in their generations... [including] he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed...for an everlasting covenant." Those who would not observe this custom "shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken my covenant" (Gen 17:14-20). Is it any wonder why Jewish Christians, taking the scripture literally, would require all those of the New Covenant to be circumcised?

Yet Paul's answer is that those who would impose the law and the temporal ordinances of Judaism on Christians become "debtors to do the whole law". He is so troubled by this legalism, that he denounces it in very strong language. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace...then is the offense of the cross ceased" (Gal 5:4,11). "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal 5:12) – in other words, for those who require the cutting of the foreskin, Paul wishes that they would be cut off completely. Strong language indeed! And note the parallel language between Paul's statement and the Lord's word to Abraham about the disobedient being "cut off from his people." Paul's point is that, since the law is a bondage and the law requires total obedience, one is logically required to keep the whole law, negating the work of the cross.

In place of this literal fulfillment of the covenant promise, Paul interprets the Mosaic ordinance of circumcision as relating to a spiritual condition of the heart. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal 5:6). "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom 2:28-29). This was earlier foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Deut 10:16; Deut 30:6; Jere 4:4). We might adapt this language to the ordinances of Jewish feast-keeping, by saying, "True keeping of the feasts is not in the letter of the law, but in the heart and the spirit."

Further to this point, when the early church considered the question of what requirements of the Law were to be placed upon the Gentiles, they reported, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well" (Acts 15:28-29). The Holy Ghost did not put any requirements on the Gentiles of being circumcised, or of keeping any of the Mosaic feasts, etc. They considered that requiring any more than this would be tempting God: "to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). Why, then, do some modern Christians think themselves wiser than the Holy Ghost in this matter, by trying to bring back that yoke of bondage that their fathers could not bear?

It should be noted further that, although the above church council decision applied specifically to the Gentiles, Paul's earlier statements in Galatians apply more broadly to the principle of the matter as related to all those who are "children of promise."

### **The Law is Dead**

For Christians, who have accepted the atoning blood of the perfect Lamb for their salvation, it should be obvious that the sacrifices and ordinances in the Law of Moses are no longer required as part of our worship or practice. One of the scriptures from Hebrews which talks about the law as a "shadow of good things to come," also says that those Mosaic sacrifices were "not the very image of the things" and could not make us perfect. "He taketh away the first [the sacrifices] that he may establish the second....It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins....Now where remission of these is [i.e., sins remitted through Christ], there is no more offering for sin" (Heb 10:1-18). The purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices was to bring a remission of sins to Israel. This was the purpose of the Day of Atonement in particular. Hebrews 10 says that this feast observance and sacrifice had to be done every year because it could not take away the sins of the people.

The author of Hebrews also says that Day of Atonement was originally necessary, because "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." The Law contained "carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation [i.e. the coming of the Messiah]" (Heb 9:7-10).

"The law was after a carnal commandment, to the administration of death; but the gospel was after the power of an endless life" (John 1:17-18).

Nephi, living prior to the coming of Christ, wrote that "we keep the law because of the commandments...wherefore we speak concerning the law, that our children may know concerning the deadness of the law; and they, by knowing the deadness of the law, may look forward unto that life which is in Christ, and know for what end the law was given. And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden their hearts against him, when the law ought to be done away. And now behold, my people, ye are a stiff-necked people; wherefore, I have spoken plain unto you, that ye can not misunderstand" (2Ne 11:46-52).

Have we misunderstood Nephi's words in our day? If not, why would those who believe the Book of Mormon, in particular, still try to keep the law that Nephi said was dead and ought to have been done away?

### **Animal sacrifices were required under the Law**

The Law of Moses defined the method of keeping the feasts and Sabbaths in great detail. If it weren't for the Law of Moses, we wouldn't even know about the feasts or the proper, God-ordained requirements for keeping them. Most of the ordinances and ceremonies described in the Law involved sacrifices of animals as part of the ritual purification of the people, in addition to numerous other ritualistic requirements.

The Passover required the sacrifice of a firstborn male lamb without blemish, and the blood of the lamb was put on the doorpost of the house where it was eaten, as a token of the destroying angel “passing over” the children of Israel in Egypt (Exod 12:2-14). The Feast of Unleavened Bread required further sacrifices of bulls, rams, and lambs during its sabbath week (Num 28:17-24). The Feast of Trumpets and Day of Atonement also required the sacrifices of bulls, rams, and lambs (Num 29:1-39).

### **Christ fulfilled the Law, no more animal sacrifices**

During His earthly ministry, Jesus declared in Matthew 5:19-20 (5:17-18, KJV) that He didn’t come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. Further, “one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled.” Does the fact that Jesus didn’t “destroy the law” mean that He still desires us to continue keeping parts of the old covenant practices in the church?

This is not the case. When Jesus gave the “Sermon on the Mount” to the Nephites (after his resurrection), the above scripture was quoted differently. “For verily I say unto you, One jot nor one tittle hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled” (3Ne 5:65). Jesus said that all the law had already been fulfilled. Alma had earlier prophesied that “every jot and tittle” would be fulfilled with the atonement of Christ – the “whole meaning of the law, every whit pointing to that great and last sacrifice” (Alm 16:214-215). Years earlier, Nephi had said that obedience to the Law would be replaced by obedience to the words of Christ (2Ne 11:57-59).

What was the law that Christ gave to the Nephites after His crucifixion? “And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings; and ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit” (3Ne 4:49). Despite the fact that nothing passed from the Law before Jesus’ crucifixion, afterward something has definitely passed from the Law. He has specifically omitted the rules on animal sacrifice that were required under the first covenant. Those rules are simply done away, and we are commanded to no longer keep them.

### **All “performances and ordinances” done away, not just sacrifices**

In case we have misunderstood what Jesus was trying to tell the children of Israel in the New World after His resurrection, He addressed the subject again in 3Ne 7:3-12.

[3Ne 7:3] And it came to pass that when Jesus had said these words, he perceived that there were some among them who marveled, and wondered what he would concerning the Law of Moses; for they understood not the saying, that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new. [Jesus said “old things have passed away” in 3Ne 5:91-92, after giving them a new law in place of the Ten Commandments – don’t be angry, don’t lust, love thy neighbor, etc.]

[3Ne 7:4] And he said unto them, Marvel not that I said unto you, that old things had passed away, and that all things had become new.

[3Ne 7:5] Behold, I say unto you, that the law is fulfilled that was given unto Moses.

[3Ne 7:6] Behold, I am he that gave the law, and I am he who covenanted with my people Israel; therefore, the law in me is fulfilled, for I have come to fulfill the law; **therefore, it hath an end.**

[3Ne 7:7] Behold, I do not destroy the prophets, for as many as have not been fulfilled in me, verily, I say unto you, shall all be fulfilled.

[3Ne 7:8] And because I said unto you, that old things hath passed away, I do not destroy that which hath been spoken concerning things which are to come.

[3Ne 7:9] For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people, is not all fulfilled; but **the law** which was given unto Moses, **hath an end in me.**

[3Ne 7:10] Behold, I am the law, and the light; look unto me, and endure to the end, and ye shall live, for unto him that endureth to the end will I give eternal life.

[3Ne 7:11] Behold, I have given unto you the commandments; therefore keep my commandments.

[3Ne 7:12] And this is the law and the prophets, for they truly testified of me.

The promises and covenants of the Lord to the literal house of Israel and seed of Abraham have not been done away, but will all be fulfilled with the restoration of the House of Israel in the last days. But the Law had an end, and now our covenant is to keep Jesus' commandments instead.

It was not only the animal sacrifices that were done away in the Christian era of the Nephites. In agreement with Jesus' words above ("the law...hath an end in me"), it is recorded, "they did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses, but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord" (4Ne 1:13). They not only did away with the animal sacrifice portion of the law of Moses, but all of the performance and ordinances of the Law of Moses were replaced with observance of Christ's law for the church.

Further confirmation of this comes earlier in the Book of Mormon, where the prophets testified that the entire law of performances and ordinances under the Law of Moses would cease to be observed after Christ came.

[Mos 8:4] I say unto you that it is expedient that ye should keep the Law of Moses as yet; but I say unto you, that the time shall come when it shall no more be expedient to keep the Law of Moses.

[Mos 8:7] Therefore there was a law [not many laws, but one "Law" of Moses] given them, yea, a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly, from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God, and their duty towards him.

[Alm 14:75] But notwithstanding the Law of Moses, they did look forward to the coming of Christ, considering that the Law of Moses was a type of his coming, and believing that they must keep those outward performances, **until** the time that he should be revealed unto them.



[Alm 16:4] And they were strict in observing the ordinances of God, according to the Law of Moses; for they were taught to keep the Law of Moses, **until** it should be fulfilled;

[2Ne 11:57] And inasmuch as it shall be expedient, ye must keep the performances and ordinances of God, **until** the law shall be fulfilled which was given unto Moses.

[2Ne 11:58] And after Christ shall have risen from the dead, he shall shew himself unto you, my children, and my beloved brethren;

[2Ne 11:59] And the words which he shall speak unto you, shall be the law which ye shall do.

This last verse was fulfilled in 3Ne 7:11, when Jesus told the Israelites to “keep my commandments.” The Nephites were the literal house of Israel, and even they were no longer obligated to keep the performances and ordinances of the Mosaic Law.

### **A new marriage covenant established, in place of the old**

How is it that the Law of Moses could be a “perpetual covenant,” “throughout your generations” (Exod 31:16; Exod 12:14) – and yet now we can say that it is no longer in effect, and no longer necessary to observe? Part of the answer was suggested to me in a sermon given in the fall of 2011 at Living Hope Restoration Branch. The significant insight presented in this section came from the brother who preached that day, although he apparently does not agree with the conclusion I have drawn from it; namely, that a literal observance of the Mosaic Law is no longer required in any sense.

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, He made a covenant with them at Mount Sinai. This covenant was described as a marriage between God and the house of Israel.

[Jere 3:14] Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you

[Jere 31:32] Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;

All covenants involve a declaration of the covenant terms, and acceptance by both parties with a solemn vow. The Law of Moses was the terms of the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. When Moses presented the law to Israel, they vowed to keep it. “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exod 24:7).

Israel and Judah were married to the Lord, but they committed adultery through idolatry. God put away Israel (divorced her), and thus the covenant of marriage between God and Israel was broken. Judah was warned of the same fate unless they would keep the

commandments, which they didn't. "Backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce" (Jere 3:6-20).

The problem of remarriage: Part of the Jewish law on divorce and remarriage is given in Deut 24:1-4 (also mentioned in Jeremiah 3):

"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed, out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife" (Deut 24:1-2).

This happened with Israel. She was divorced by God, and went to commit idolatry with her pagan lovers. She went into bondage and was taken out of the land of Israel. What happens if Israel wants to leave the second husband and come back to God, her first husband? After God divorced Israel, how can He bring her back into the covenant?

"And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, ...and sendeth her out of his house; **or if the latter husband die**, which took her to be his wife; **Her former husband** which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; **for that is abomination before the Lord**; and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (Deut 24:3-4).

God made the covenant with Israel, which terms included the laws on marriage. According to the Law, the first husband was prohibited from taking the first wife again, to avoid defiling the land. God was the first husband. If God was going to honor His own law to the Israelites, He couldn't remarry Israel after she has been divorced and married to another. How can God ever reclaim the House of Israel, if He can't bring her back into the marriage covenant again?

The solution is suggested in Romans chapter 7. "For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband only as long as he liveth; for if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Rom 7:1-3).

We said earlier that God was in a marriage covenant with the House of Israel. But specifically, Jesus said that He is the God of Israel, the one who gave the law (Matt 9:19; John 8:58; 2Ne 12:78; 2Ne 11:55; 1Ne 7:46; 2Ne 1:23). Jesus was the Bridegroom, and the divine husband of the House of Israel. While He was alive, according to the Jewish law on marriage, He could not remarry Israel after she had been another man's husband.

**But if the Bridegroom is dead**, the original marriage covenant is nullified, and the woman (Israel) is free from that law forever. The marriage covenant is not "eternal marriage," as taught by the Mormons or as suggested in the question of the Sadducees to Jesus (Luke 20:27-36). Death of one spouse frees the living spouse from the terms of the original covenant.

So what happens now if Israel wants to come back into a marriage covenant with God? They cannot come back under the old covenant, because the first husband (the Bridegroom) is dead. But they can make a new covenant with a “new husband,” who has come alive from the dead. This is explicitly the point that Paul made in Romans.

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God” (Rom 7:4).

Besides all the other reasons Jesus had to die, to make an atonement for sins, etc.; another reason for His death was to finally and completely nullify the covenant of marriage with Israel that had been broken by her divorce and remarriage to pagan lovers. Jesus had to die to free her from the obligations of the old covenant so that a new covenant could be made, allowing the house of Israel to come back into the marriage again.

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jere 31:31-33).

If Israel were to engage in two marriage covenants at the same time, she would be an adulteress (Rom 7:3). In the same way, if we try to live under the obligations of two covenants at the same time, the old and the new, we may be guilty similarly of acting in a sort of spiritual adultery. The Lord only calls us into one of these covenants at a time – that’s why He had to take away the old covenant in order to establish the new (Heb 10:9).

### **The Law is not perpetual**

Still, the argument continues to be made that the feasts and certain other rituals of Moses’ law were “perpetual” ordinances, “throughout all your generations”. This is taken to imply that the letter of the ordinances should somehow still play a part in Christian observance. This is shown above to be false, because though the supposedly perpetual marriage covenant, once broken and nullified, is no longer in effect.

In the days of the future restoration of Israel, it is prophesied, “Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land” (Jere 23:7-8).

Recall that Passover and Tabernacles are celebrations of God bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. Jeremiah elsewhere prophesies of this time: “in those days, saith the

Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done anymore. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it..." (Jere 3:16-17). The ark of the covenant here symbolizes the Mosaic system with its laws and ordinances established at Sinai. Jeremiah's prophecy, as part of Old Testament scripture, foretold that there would come a day when they would no longer even remember the ark of the covenant or salvation from Egypt. Thus the argument of a "perpetual" covenant is contradicted, even in the Old Testament itself. Thus, the claim that these Mosaic ordinances were perpetual (meaning, never to be done away) is mistaken.

We should compare this use of language with the interesting use of "eternal" and "everlasting" in D&C 18. There the Lord says, "nevertheless, it is not written that there shall be no end to this torment [of hell]; but it is written endless torment.... For, behold, I am endless, and the punishment which is given from my hand is endless punishment, for Endless is my name; wherefore-- Eternal punishment is God's punishment. Endless punishment is God's punishment" (D&C 18:1e-2e).

We know from D&C 76 and others that there is a possibility of an end of punishment to those who go to hell after death, after their sufferings. The Lord explains the use of this sort of language – it is meant to convey meaning, beyond the literal interpretation of the words: "Again, it is written eternal damnation; wherefore it is more express than other scriptures, that it might work upon the hearts of the children of men, altogether for my name's glory" (D&C 18:2a). In the same way, speaking to the Israelites of a "perpetual covenant" conveyed meaning to them, teaching of God's faithfulness to them. Yet it doesn't mean that there was never the possibility of the covenant coming to and final end and fulfillment. A new and better covenant was given in its place.

### **The Law was taken away, and done away with**

There are many other scriptures stating that the Law would be done away, or taken away, and no longer be in effect.

Hebrews 8:13 says of the old covenant, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

[Heb 9:10] [the Law] consisted only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

[Heb 10:9] Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. **He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.**

[2Cor 3:7] But if the ministration of death [i.e., the Law], written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away;

[2Cor 3:8] How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?

[2Cor 3:9] For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

[2Cor 3:10] For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

[2Cor 3:11] For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

[2Cor 3:12] Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech;

[2Cor 3:13] And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of **that which is abolished**;

Paul certainly did use great “plainness of speech” in stating that the Law and the old covenant, no matter what glory they might have had, were done away and abolished. Yet one pamphlet on Messianic Judaism chooses to focus only on Paul’s personal practice while among the Jews, rather than his strong statements against the continued need to practice Mosaic ordinances as part of the Christian faith. “Rabbi Shaul [Paul] kept the Law as much as he could, as did the other early Messianic Jews, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:17)” (David Chernoff, *Messianic Judaism: Questions & Answers*; Havertown, PA: MMI Publishing Co., 1990; p. 18). It is true that Paul did worship in the synagogue and kept up certain other practices, apparently in an attempt to reach his Jewish brethren. But we need to look clearly at his teaching, which was left for the instruction of the Christian church.

Interestingly, the Messianic Jewish pamphlet refers to Paul as “Rabbi” (from his former non-Christian faith), rather than “Apostle” of his Christian faith. “*Rabbi Shaul* – Paul of the New Covenant; he was a rabbi who studied under the feet of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel in the first century. (Acts 22:3)” (*ibid.*, p. 26-27). This overlooks Paul’s own declaration of how he acquired his knowledge of Christian gospel. “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:11-12). This seems very demonstrative of the error of Messianic Judaism, illustrated by their focus on Paul’s learning under the instruction of Gamaliel, rather than his instruction by the revelation of Christ.

[Eph 2:15] Having **abolished** in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

[1Cor 13:10] But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

The Book of Mormon authors also make the point very clearly:

[2Ne 11:51] And after the law is fulfilled in Christ, that they need not harden their hearts against him, when the law ought to be done away.

[3Ne 7:9] For behold, the covenant which I have made with my people, is not all fulfilled; but **the law** which was given unto Moses, **hath an end in me**.

Other Old Testament prophets living under the Mosaic system gave similar witness to the ultimate weakness and fate of the Law. Psa 51:17 says that the “sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart.” Jere 7:21-14 indicates that original command at Mount Sinai was not to offer burnt offerings, but to obey God’s voice. Hosea 6:6 says, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” In Matt 9:14 and 12:6, Jesus quoted this scripture as an indication that He was revealing a greater truth than the Law of Moses.

## **Other laws done away**

### **Sabbath observance under the new covenant**

Several of the Jewish feast days are Sabbaths, to be kept with strict commandments against working or other common activities. The Passover was observed a certain number of days following a new moon. Not only were the feast days commanded under the Mosaic covenant as special Sabbaths, but the regular weekly Sabbath was also commanded to be kept “throughout their generations” (Exod 31:12-18).

Yet in Col 2:16-17, Paul writes, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a 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.” In Romans, he writes, “One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it...For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's...” (Rom 14:5-9).

It doesn’t sound from this that Paul was extremely concerned about whether Christians kept one particular day holy, as long as they were living “unto the Lord” and honoring Him. Wasn’t Paul aware of the commandments in Exodus, written on tables of stone, that the Sabbaths were to be kept perpetually? It is certain he was aware of this fact, as a former Pharisee. But he was also aware that the Holy Spirit hadn’t dictated that Gentile Christians were required to keep the Old Testament Sabbaths (Acts 15), and therefore those legal requirements of Moses were not imperative for them. Paul was more concerned about the word written by the Spirit upon “fleshly tables of the heart” than in tables of stone (2Cor 3:3).

It should also be noted that, though portions of the Ten Commandments are quoted in several places in the New Testament, in none of those places is the 4th commandment reiterated, to keep the Sabbath day holy (Matt 5; Matt 19:18-19; Mark 10:17; Luke 18:20; Rom 13:9; James 2:11).

What then shall we do with exhortations to “keep the Sabbath holy” in latter-day scripture? Does its omission from the New Testament mean that it’s no longer important? When the Doctrine and Covenants commands the observance of the Sabbath

(D&C 68:4d), is this a return to the legalism of keeping the ordinances in the Mosaic Law?

On this latter point, it is important to note the historical context. In the early Restoration, there are many historical references to the “Sabbath” in Joseph Smith’s writings and those of the early saints. Their use of the term “Sabbath” referred to the Christian practice of observing Sunday as the Lord’s day, not the Jewish Sabbath on Saturday.

In D&C 119, the Lord counseled, “concerning the Sabbath of the Lord, the church is admonished that until further revelation is received, or the quorums of the church are assembled to decide concerning the law in the church articles and covenants, the Saints are to observe the first day of the week commonly called the Lord's day, as a day of rest: as a day of worship, as given in the covenants and commandments. And on this day they should refrain from unnecessary work; nevertheless, nothing should be permitted to go to waste on that day, nor should necessary work be neglected.” Also, importantly, “Be not harsh in judgment but merciful in this, as in all other things. Be not hypocrites nor of those who make a man an offender for a word” (D&C 119:7).

The Lord has commanded us to “let nothing separate you from each other and the work whereunto you have been called” (D&C 122:17b). This issue of Sabbath and feast observance not only divides the saints ideologically, it literally divides us in our worship, as some today are choosing to worship on Saturday instead of Sunday. The Lord’s revelation admonishes against private interpretations on this, but directs the latter-day church to agree by common consent if any change is to be made in Sabbath worship. There is wisdom in this, as in general we are commanded to do all things by common consent in the church, by the prayer of faith (D&C 25:1b; D&C 27:4c).

In D&C 59:2f-h also it is said, “that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto thee to rest from thy labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days, and at all times; but remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations, and thy sacraments, unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord.”

In the Book of Mormon, prior to the coming of Christ, the Sabbath observance was commanded and kept (Jarom 1:11; Mos 7:116-118; Mos 9:56). After Christ came, the people “did not walk any more after the performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses, but they did walk after the commandments which they had received from their Lord and their God, continuing in fasting and prayer, and in meeting together oft, both to pray and to hear the word of the Lord” (4Ne 1:13; also Mni 6:6).

This is an important distinction. Presumably, the people were no longer obligated to keep “the Sabbath,” according to the performances and ordinances in the Law of Moses, but they did meet together often to worship Him. We are not told upon which day(s) of the week they met, nor does it appear important. This is an important distinction, showing

that the Law of Moses had important parallels that inform our worship of Christ today, but which no longer dictate how and why we worship Him. If the feasts and their Sabbaths are observed out of an obligation to keep the legal, scriptural requirements of the Law, this important distinction between covenants is blurred.

### **Food is not to be forbidden**

Another aspect to the Jewish laws and feasts is that certain foods were commanded not to be partaken. Leaven was strictly forbidden to even be in the house during the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread (Exod 12:15,19; Exod 13:7). (Interestingly, the offering made at Pentecost was made with leaven, Lev 23:17, showing that leaven wasn't universally seen as "evil"; also Matt 13:32.) Many other commandments in the Mosaic Law prohibited eating certain types of meats and other foods. These are just as much a part of the Biblical commandments as keeping the feasts.

However in Colossians, Paul speaks strongly about this subject. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday... Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, which are after the doctrines and commandments of men, who teach you to touch not, taste not, handle not; all those things which are to perish with the using? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting the body as to the satisfying the flesh, not in any honor to God" (Col 2:16,20-22).

The Doctrine and Covenants also tells us that "the fullness of the earth is yours: the beasts of the fields, and the fowls of the air...the herb, and the good things which come of the earth...yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye, and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body, and to enliven the soul. And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made, to be used with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion" (D&C 59:4-5a).

This is one more evidence that the restrictions imposed on the Israelites under their covenant are no longer in effect for those who are living in the liberty of the New Covenant.

### **Tithing Transformed**

Both the old covenant and the new covenant involve laws on tithing. It will not be shown in great detail here, but despite the fact that there are similarities, the two laws are different – just as the law on Passover in the old covenant was changed to the worship of Christ in the new. We observe the law of tithing today in accordance with latter day revelation, not according to the practices commanded under the Mosaic Law.



### **Priesthood Changed**

Again, despite the similarities between the priesthoods under the old covenant and the new covenant, the two are fundamentally different. Hebrews 7:11-12 indicates that a change in law requires a change in priesthood. We can also see from Exodus 34:1-2 (Inspired Version only) that the priesthood under the Levitical law was but an inferior system, devoid of the Melchizedek priesthood, because of the transgressions of the house of Israel.

Despite the promise that the “sons of Levi” will again minister in the latter days (Mal 3:3), we find the fulfillment of this to be something greater, beyond merely the literal fulfillment of the temporal promises made to Israel. In the latter days, Joseph Smith was promised by the angel that the prophecy in Malachi would be fulfilled. In response to that promise, the Aaronic priesthood was revealed and confirmed by John the Baptist, and perpetuated in the ordination of priests, teachers, and deacons of the Aaronic order in the latter day church (D&C 104:1-2). The priesthood is promised to all those who will be “sons of Moses and sons of Aaron” (D&C 83:6), not just to those who are literal descendants of Levi or Aaron, as was required under the old covenant.

In all these things, it is clear that the old covenant was a type and shadow pointing to the promises and blessings of the new covenant, but not the fulfillment in itself. The high priestly system of the Mosaic law was an imperfect reflection of the earlier high priests after the order of Melchisedec (Heb 7:1-12; Gen 14:28; Exod 34:1-2).

### **Is it reasonable to keep only part of the law?**

Those Christians who advocate observing the Law of Moses only keep portions of the Mosaic commandments. The animal sacrifices are excluded, and certain other commandments may be spiritualized instead of taken literally; yet they still insist that some performances of the Law ought to be kept.

However as noted earlier, Paul said of those who required one part of the law (circumcision) to be kept by Christians, “he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal 5:3). Paul was correct. If someone advocates keeping the feasts with their Sabbaths and ordinances according to the Law, why not keep the rest of the Mosaic Law? Why pick and choose which laws to follow and which to ignore? James makes the point even stronger, by saying, “For whosoever shall, save in one point, keep the whole law, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10).

The same God who commanded the feast of Passover to be kept, also commanded the sacrifice of a firstborn unblemished lamb, with the blood placed on the posts of the door. For Christians who claim to be faithfully keeping the Feast of Passover, are you keeping the whole law or just part of it? And if you are not keeping the Law of Moses to the letter, then what is the benefit in keeping half the letter of the law?

The same God who commanded the feast of Tabernacles to be kept also commanded the high priest to offer a bullock and a sin offering. He commanded that those who would not keep the Day of Atonement as a Sabbath, as commanded in the Law, “shall be cut off from among his people” (Lev 23:27-32; Exod 30:10). The same God who made a perpetual covenant with Israel in the Passover feast, also said that the Aaronic priesthood was “upon Aaron, and upon his sons, [and] it shall be a statute forever unto him and his seed after him” (Exod 28:43) – yet the Aaronic priesthood in the latter-day church is open to those who are not of the lineage of Aaron.

Questions for those who try to keep only part of the Law of Moses: Do you go to the Jewish priest to offer a ram and two goats once a year at the Day of Atonement? Do you tie the sash on the horn of a goat and release it into the wilderness once a year, to carry the sins of Israel into the wilderness (Lev 16:5-27)? Or are you “spiritualizing away” parts of the scriptures that have been given by God and commanded to be kept “throughout your generations”? The above commandments are solemnly stated to be “by a statute for ever” and “an everlasting statute unto you,” both for Israelites and even for “a stranger that sojourneth among you” (Lev 16:29-34).

If one takes upon himself to be the judge of which laws are important and which laws aren’t important, isn’t this an example of judging the law, rather than doing the law (James 4:11)? If we are going to pick and choose which laws are important, how does this honor the Lawgiver? Do you think that you can please God by keeping only parts of the Law, and disregarding other parts as you see fit; seeing that according to James, you are guilty of breaking the whole law given by that same God?

### **Are we denying Christ by keeping the Law?**

In this article, a strong argument has been advanced that the performances and ordinances of the Law have been completely fulfilled in Christ, and that no performances and ordinances of the Law of Moses are now required to be kept by the children of God in order to find favor with God. Rather, Christ requires us to worship Him under the terms of a new and better covenant, through His blood (Heb 13:20) and in accordance with His commandments (3Ne 7:9-11).

The Apostle Paul was above quoted as saying that those who require the works of the flesh under the Law become “debtors to do the whole law,” that “Christ is become of no effect unto you...ye are fallen from grace,” and he wished that “they were even cut off which trouble you” (Gal 5:4,11,12). Elsewhere in Galatians, Paul makes the case with equal vigor:

[Gal 2:16] Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

[Gal 2:17] But **if, while** we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

[Gal 2:18] For if I build again the things which I destroyed [i.e. salvation through works of the law], I make myself a transgressor.

In other words, if we on the one hand seek to be “justified by Christ,” and yet at the same time require obedience to the works of the law (which we cannot keep); thus we become transgressors and are no longer justified by faith. We are guilty of teaching and trying to live a mixed message – requiring obedience to dead works and living faith at the same time – and we cannot be justified by this approach. Taken together with Paul’s later statement that “ye are fallen from grace,” it makes clear how strongly he viewed this subject.

Let there be no mistake about how strongly Paul is making the argument. He goes on:

[Gal 2:19] For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

[Gal 2:20] I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

[Gal 2:21] I do **not frustrate the grace of God**; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is **dead in vain**.

With these strong words in mind, it would be easy to make the argument that anyone today who is trying to keep performances of the Law of Moses, including certain partial observances of Passover or the other feasts, are not only guilty of extraneous religious activity, but of a serious and fatal spiritual theology. Paul is making a serious charge – that of “falling from grace,” frustrating the grace of God, and nullifying the death of Christ, by requiring righteousness to be fulfilled under the terms of the Law.

In Romans 10, Paul distinguishes the righteousness that comes through the Law, as sought by his brethren of the Jewish religion, from the righteousness that comes through faith. The Jews, “being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” How is it that they are seeking to establish their own righteousness? “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:3,5).

Today, those who are strongly urging the keeping of performances under the Jewish law are doing so on the basis that such righteousness is commanded by the law given by God. This is the same argument made by the Jews of old. Yet, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth... That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:4-9).

I will not go so far as to say that we are *necessarily* denying Christ by trying to keep certain forms of the Old Testament law. It is possible to make the point too strongly, and to apply it too broadly. There are several points that can be made to balance the scale, so

that we don't go too far in accusing those who choose to worship in some ways reminiscent of Old Testament practices.

First, I realize that many who do this are honestly trying to worship Christ according to their conscience. They have honestly come to the conclusion, based on a number of scriptural injunctions (although I believe mistakenly), that the commandments in the law ought to be kept as "perpetual ordinances." I have shown that despite such statements, the original law was not perpetual, because at the very least the sacrifices have now been forbidden by Christ.

Though these people are not truly keeping the Law as written, they are observing it in a way that focuses on Christ and the new covenant, using the types and shadows to enrich their understandings of Christ's sacrifice. If such practices are truly done with an "eye single to the glory of God," and in harmony with the truth of the New Covenant, it could be argued that it's not fatal to their faith to incorporate such practices into their worship.

Those who engage in such practices are *not necessarily* requiring all Christians to come under the works of the law in order to be accepted as members in good standing in the faith of Christ. As long as they simply choose to worship according to their own conscience, they may not be going as far as the Judaizers in Paul's day, which evoked his strongest denunciations.

However, they should be forewarned. There are those today advocating "feast worship" and other practices, who do seem to look down on and criticize other Christians for not practicing Christianity in that way. Taken too far, they may in fact be guilty of the very error which Paul strongly condemns – seeking for righteousness under the Law, and thus making Christ "dead in vain."

On the subject of conscience, the argument was made above that those who choose to keep certain Sabbaths and ordinances should not judge those who don't as being less Christian (Col 2:16-17; Rom 14:5-9). However, in fairness, we should be careful to apply the argument both ways. Those of us who believe it is not necessary to keep the Passover literally should be careful not to judge our brothers who do, as long as they are truly brothers in the faith and are engaging in their worship according to the faith of Christ.

Any performance of worship, truly done in faith and directed toward God and his son Jesus Christ, and done in faith will be blessed – not because of the performance, but because of faith. Let not those who think that the observance of a dead law, nullified by the death and resurrection of Christ, brings them any merit before God. At best, any outward performances of worship are merely the framework through which our faith is expressed.

That shouldn't prevent us from teaching one another the truth of the gospel, according to the promises and blessings of the new covenant. Where there is error being taught in the name of Christ, these things ought to be proclaimed according to the rich truth of

scripture. If the arguments presented in this paper are correct, there is a deep well of scripture on this subject, showing that all of the performances and ordinances of the Law have been done away and supplanted by a new covenant containing better promises and living ordinances.

This is indeed a profound truth, that the Law of Moses was but a “shadow of good things to come, and **not** the very image of the things” (Heb 10:1). It is called a shadow for a reason – the Law was only an imperfect image of things seen in the light, not the light itself. God now calls us to worship Him in the light, not in the shadow.

### **How then should we keep the feasts?**

All Christians implicitly agree that at least part of the Law is no longer necessary to observe. If a literal observance of only part of the Old Testament commandments is not reasonable, how then should we keep the feasts (if at all)? If it is inconsistent to “spiritualize away” parts of the Mosaic ordinances, while keeping other parts to the letter, then what should be done?

Many scriptures have been presented in this paper, showing that Christ fulfilled the whole law with His death and resurrection. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from is that Christ has already spiritualized all the particular ordinances of the Law in Himself, not only the parts of the Law requiring animal sacrifices. He has fulfilled the entire law of Passover, Pentecost, and Day of Atonement in every detail. Thus, there is no great benefit in eating unleavened bread at Passover, any more than in killing a lamb of the first year, both of which were commanded by Moses.

The following headings suggest ways in which we are already keeping the Law (the fulfillment of it) in the latter-day gospel of Christ, so that it’s not necessary to return to a literal observance of certain selected rules of the Mosaic Law.

#### **Passover**

Christ is our Passover and the unleavened bread. “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor 5:6-8). He is the Firstfruits (1Cor 15:20,23).

Trying to keep the Passover semi-literally is inconsistent – that it, in literally eating unleavened bread and bitter herbs but omitting the sacrifice of a literal lamb. Christ not only fulfilled the animal sacrifice. He was without sin, symbolized by the unleavened bread. Paul directly implies that the importance of unleavened bread is not in the eating, but in manifesting “sincerity and truth,” thus demonstrating the life of Christ.

The point of Passover was remembrance –the children of Israel remembered their deliverance from Egypt. Yet, the prophecy said that there would come a day when they would no longer remember that event, because of a greater deliverance to be made by God (Jere 3:16-17).

Now under the New Covenant, we have a different celebration of remembrance for a greater act of God’s deliverance. We remember that Christ has delivered us from sin, with the bread and wine of the sacrament. In the RLDS tradition, this service is held once a month, not once a year as with the Passover feast. Unleavened bread could be used but is not necessary, because the important point was not what goes into our mouth, but the righteousness that we live (Matt 15:10). We no longer need to eat bitter herbs, but to afflict our souls through repentance as we remember Christ’s sacrifice.

### **Pentecost (Feast of Weeks)**

Jesus promised His disciples that He must go, so that He could send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-8). Christ has already spiritualized the Pentecost, by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after His resurrection (Acts 2).

The endowment of the Holy Spirit given on the Day of Pentecost granted spiritual power by which the gospel of Jesus Christ could be taken to “all nations” (Matt 28:18), visibly symbolized by manifestation of the gift of tongues (Acts 2:2-4). This continues to be fulfilled in the latter-day work, with the promise of a greater endowment that awaits the children of God and the final proclamation of the gospel throughout the world.

### **Feast of Tabernacles**

The Feast of Tabernacles was the last feast in the year requiring attendance by the Israelites, after the fall ingathering. The Israelites were commanded to keep a Sabbath for seven days. This was a week of rejoicing in community, and involved the construction of temporary booths, or tabernacles, to dwell in and to rejoice before the Lord with palm branches in remembrance of God’s deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt (Deut 16:12-16).

The feast of Tabernacles required a burnt offering, which Jesus said was to be done away after His death (Lev 23:36; 3Ne 4:49). The main emphasis of Tabernacles was on praise, thanksgiving, and worship toward God, which are well covered in the new covenant without requiring specific forms of Old Testament ritual.

As has been discussed above, it could be argued that Tabernacles symbolized the final deliverance of God’s people into a Zion condition, and could thus be seen as a part of the Law that is yet to be fulfilled in the future. But it has also been shown that all the performances and ordinances of the Law have already been fulfilled in Christ. Both Passover and Tabernacles remembered deliverance from Egypt, and God said the Israelites in the latter days would no longer remember Egypt in the last days (Jere 23:7-8).

Even the feast of Tabernacles has its foreshadowing in Christ. “We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Heb 8:1-2). The Lord no longer requires us to build earthly tabernacles pitched by man, but rather to manifest our worship and praise through the “true tabernacle,” the hope in our eternal salvation in His heavenly kingdom.

Further, in the latter-day church we have another way in which the essence of Tabernacles is expressed. In the RLDS Church, we have annual youth camps and reunions, in which the saints gather apart from their daily activities, and worship before the Lord for a week. This is the akin to the worship setting envisioned in the feast of Tabernacles. Not only do we engage in worship during reunions, but there is often a sense of community and Zion conditions among the saints when they assemble.

### **Day of Atonement**

Before the feast of Tabernacles, the Day of Atonement was celebrated, in which the sins of Israel were presented before the Lord and an offering made to obtain God’s forgiveness. It was the only day in the year when the high priest was allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies.

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered a bullock as a burnt offering for his sins and those of his family. The congregation brought two goats as an offering. One goat was killed in the tabernacle, and the other goat was taken out into the wilderness, symbolically carrying away the sins of Israel. This was “a statute forever unto you...a Sabbath of rest,” and “an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year” (Lev 16:2-34).

Christ fulfilled all the ordinances related to the Day of Atonement, and there is no longer a need for a sacrifice to be made once a year for our sins. This is made abundantly clear in the book of Hebrews. Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He is the scapegoat upon which our sins were laid and sent out into the wilderness. He is the high priest, who entered into the true holy place (the presence of God) to make a perfect atonement for us (Heb 9:7-10).

[Heb 9:24] For Christ is **not** entered into the holy places made with hands [i.e., the Jewish tabernacle], which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

The Law of Moses with all its ordinances was only a figure (type and shadow) of the greater sacrifice that Christ was to make. It could not make its worshipers perfect – only the blood of Christ could “purge your conscience from dead works”(Heb 9:9-14).

Those who continue to worship at the Passover celebration because it’s an “everlasting statute,” and yet fail to offer the required burnt offerings once a year at the Day of Atonement, are guilty of breaking the whole Law of Moses, no matter how good are their

intentions or what fragmentary parts of the old covenant ordinances that they may be trying to keep.

So how are we to keep the Day of Atonement as Christians under the New Covenant? We do not need to offer a sacrifice once a year for redemption from sin. We don't even have to wait for once a month or once a week when we come to the table of the Lord's Supper. We can, and must, offer a continual sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit, through repentance from dead works.

The Day of Atonement, which is claimed in scripture to be an "everlasting statute," could never truly be everlasting. It could not be practiced by the Jews into eternity, nor did it promise them eternal redemption. But we have a sacrifice which is truly everlasting, which brings eternal salvation and inheritance through the blood of Christ.

[Heb 9:12] Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

[Heb 9:15] And for this cause [that the Law could not save] he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

## **Summary**

The Law of Moses is dead. It always has been dead, even when it was in effect. Our only hope is not in the "shadow of good things" that it represented, but in the good things themselves which come through faith in Christ. The Law was a lesser covenant and a bondage to its adherents, given to a people who were hard-hearted and unwilling to receive the higher law at Mount Sinai. They received the Law but lost the Melchizedek priesthood from their midst because of their rebellion.

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ fulfilled the whole law with all its performances and ordinances, not merely the portions requiring animal sacrifice. He spiritualized all the obligations of the Law and became the fulfillment of it entirely. His divorcement of the house of Israel because of their transgression, and finally His death on the cross, brought about a complete nullification of the old covenant with its ordinances. Only in this manner could He establish a new covenant with the house of Israel. Though the promises and prophecies of a future restoration remain in effect and are available to the literal house of Israel, their restoration doesn't come because of their lineage or their Law, but through faith and obedience under the terms of the new covenant of His blood.

In Christianity, and in particular within the latter-day Restoration movement, we are already fulfilling the essence of the commandments that were foreshadowed by the Law of Moses. This paper has discussed some of those aspects, and there may be others not considered here.



Despite the scriptures stating that the Law and its ordinances were perpetual and everlasting, it is clear that this could not be literally true of the Law revealed through Moses. From the beginning, the Law was meant to be supplanted by the new covenant, and its “everlasting” significance was only to be found through faith in the Son of God. This includes the Sabbath laws, the laws against eating certain foods, tithing, and priesthood. All were fulfilled and transformed under the new covenant.

Those who think that they are honoring God by keeping a part-literal, part-symbolic version of the Law of Moses and its ordinances are not truly keeping God’s Law by any alleged faithfulness to the “scriptures, as written.” If there is any value for someone to keep certain performances, it is not in the fact that they are obeying the rules of a dead and broken covenant, but only insofar as they comply with the obligations of the new covenant. Outward performances of worship are not inherently honoring to God, but only through the inward sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit.

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1Cor 5:7-8).

### **Appendix A: Why keep Hanukkah vs. Christmas?**

Many of the reasons for keeping the Jewish feasts center on the fact that those regulations were scriptural declarations. Though I have argued here that no such argument carries any weight because of the fulfilling of the covenants, it is at least a reasonable argument to consider. However, many who now advocate keeping the Biblical feasts also make a practice of observing other Jewish celebrations, such as Hanukkah. Often the argument is further made, that other Christians are in the wrong for observing Christmas, which is a “pagan” celebration.

This makes no sense to me at all. Hanukkah is not even a Biblical feast, and it’s practice is nowhere commanded in scripture (it is mentioned as the “feast of dedication” in John 10:22). It is simply a celebration of a purported miracle of the Jews, commemorating the rededication of the Second Jewish Temple at the time of the Maccabean Revolt of the 2nd century BC. This historical tradition is that there was only enough olive oil to burn in the menorah for one day, yet the oil miraculously burned for eight days. It is not particularly a religious holiday, and is not observed as a Sabbath in Jewish custom.

How is it honoring God to keep Hanukkah, a celebration of a miracle in pre-Christian Judaism, instead of Christmas, which is specifically observed in recognition of the birth of the Savior of mankind? Scripture doesn’t contain even a hint that either celebration is commanded for the faithful. It is suggested that we are honoring our “Hebrew heritage” by observing this Jewish festival. While there is certainly nothing wrong with recognizing a miracle of God in blessing the Jews, there seems to be nothing of particular

spiritual value for Christians to honor a heritage of a non-Christian people. While it is important to recognize the covenants which God made with the nation of Israel, which covenants are ultimately connected with the coming of the righteous “seed” (i.e., Christ), Hanukkah is not a part of the scripturally mandated covenants between God and Israel.

The claim is made that Christmas is a pagan holiday, based on the Roman feast of Saturnalia. It is probably true that the practice of gift-giving and the date of December 25 have found influence from Roman practices; and that our modern celebrations have become clouded with extraneous symbols, such as Santa Claus and excessive commercialization. Yet, the essence of the Christmas celebration, for any who truly understand and observe the Christian holiday, is in no way “pagan.” We do not worship the sun deity, nor make offerings to Saturn. Such practices are so far from the minds of modern culture as to make the claim of “paganism” laughable.

(The Mishna and Talmud claim that the Saturnalia feast was a paganization of an earlier festival begun by Adam himself, at the time of the winter solstice. While this connection is probably dubious, it is at least an interesting footnote to this subject.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturnalia#Theology\\_and\\_philosophical\\_views](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturnalia#Theology_and_philosophical_views)).

True Christians do not believe that the worldly version of Christmas (Santa Claus, reindeer, commercialism, etc.) is the true spirit of Christmas. We may participate in certain activities such as gift-giving in common with others in the secular society, but such observance does not take away from our desire to honor Christ in remembering His birth. However, it certainly is well-advised that we exercise wisdom by avoiding the secular excesses that are peripherally associated with the Christmas holiday.

Many recognize the fact that Christ was more likely born in April, and some even observe Christmas in April instead of December. However, this doesn’t make such celebration any more scriptural or more important than observing it at the common date; nor does it provide any logical basis for celebrating Hanukkah instead of Christmas in December.

In summary, neither the celebrations of Christmas nor Hanukkah are scriptural, nor are they necessary to our spiritual walk with God. But only one of them (Christmas) is in any way ostensibly Christian, notwithstanding some of the incidental traditions associated with the holiday.

## **Appendix B: Phases of the Law**

I have heard it said that the Law of Moses was given in phases. The portion with the Ten Commandments, Passover, etc. were given at an early stage of the children of Israel’s sojourn at Mount Sinai. At a later period, they disobeyed and rebelled, and were given the remainder of the Law with all its thousands of particular details and restrictions. The early part, it is claimed, was a more spiritual portion of the Law and still has some merit for us to observe today.

There does seem to be some truth in the idea of the Law being given in phases. Let's examine this in detail to see if it has any bearing on the subject.

### Moses' Law, Phase 1

When the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, God promised "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (Exod 19:5-6). Note the similarity between this and the promises in 1st Peter: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" (1Pet 2:9).

It seems that God was prepared to make the "new covenant" offer to the Israelites at that time. He commanded the people to sanctify themselves for three days, and then to "come up to the mount" (Exod 19:10-13). But when the Lord sounded the trumpet, the people had not sanctified themselves, and they were afraid and didn't want to come up to meet the Lord (Exod 19:16-24; Exod 20:18-21). The book of Hebrews makes it clear that the people "refused" God at that point (Heb 13:18-25).

### Moses' Law, Phase 2

In the first phase, all God told them was to sanctify themselves and come unto Him. Since they refused to sanctify themselves and to make themselves ready for His presence, He had to give them a lesser law.

In Exodus 20, God begins to give them additional laws, starting with the Ten Commandments. Immediately after the Ten Commandments, they were also commanded to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings (Exod 20:24-25). Slavery was condoned under certain conditions (Exod 21:1-11). They were told that judgment was to be manifest in the dictum, "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Exod 21:24), which Jesus contradicted with the celestial law in Matt 5:40-44. Exodus 23 discusses the Sabbath and the feasts, including their animal sacrifice requirements.

At that point, Moses built an altar and the children of Israel made a covenant to follow the Lord's commandments (Exod 24:1-8). Then Moses went into the mountain to receive more commandments, which should be considered additional portions of "Moses' Law Phase 2," including instructions on the tabernacle, the priesthood, and a reiteration of the Sabbath law (Exodus chapters 24-31).

### Moses' Law Phase 3

But then came the golden calf, the breaking of the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, and the removal of the Melchizedek priesthood from their midst (Exod 32:1-34:2, Inspired Version). Apparently because of the rebelliousness of the children of Israel, this was a turning point in their spiritual journey.

Moses made two more tablets and the law was given again and many more laws added, but it seems clear that these laws were of a temporal and less spiritual nature than the first. After this, starting in Exod 34:3 and continuing through the entire book of Leviticus, many rules were given to the Israelites as obligations under what is now referred to as the Mosaic Law.

### Recapitulation

It could be argued since the laws on the feasts were given before the rebellion of the children of Israel and the lengthy enumeration of mundane laws, that they were the “more spiritual” portion of the Law. Yet, Moses’ Law Phase 2 was given after the Israelites had already turned away from the Lord and refused to come up to the mountain.

Phase 2 (which does not include many of the rules for Passover and other feasts as described in Leviticus) still required animal sacrifice that was later fulfilled by Christ and forbidden to be practiced. It included the Ten Commandments, which Jesus later corrected by giving a higher law in the Sermon on the Mount. Clearly, Phase 2 was not the celestial law.

Only “Moses’ Law Phase 1” in Exodus 19 could possibly be argued as being a “celestial” or more spiritual law, because it seems to reflect the promises of the new covenant and doesn’t mention animal sacrifice (see also Jere 7:21-24). But Phase 1 also doesn’t include any mention of the Passover or the other feasts. Those were part of the schoolmaster law given to a rebellious and stubborn people to point them toward Christ, not the fulfillment of the law as manifest in the new covenant.

Thus, this presumed division of the Law of Moses into phases does not provide any rational justification for continuing to keep the Jewish feasts under the Christian system.