



"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire."
—Gustav Mahler

28-Mar-18

Keeping Godly Traditions (Part Two)

In Part One, we saw that godly tradition is an essential facet of life for a Christian. While Jesus rebuked the Pharisees in Matthew 15 and Mark 7 for exalting their manmade traditions over God's commandments, the apostle Paul exhorts us in [II Thessalonians 2:15](#) to hold fast to the traditions we have been taught in the church. He refers to those traditions that have developed from what [God](#) has commanded in His Word.

One such tradition derives from [Exodus 12:40-42](#):

Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

Here are the same verses from *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*:

The Israelites had lived in Egypt 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, God's entire army left Egypt. God kept watch all night, watching over the Israelites as he brought them out of Egypt. Because God kept watch, all Israel for all generations will honor God by keeping watch this night—a watchnight.

Why do we in the churches of God keep this commanded tradition of God? What is its origin? Do we really understand it as God intends us to, or as some have asserted, is our keeping of the [Night To Be Much Observed](#) merely Herbert W. Armstrong's "pipe dream"?

Contrary to the belief of many, it is no little, insignificant tradition that we celebrate by joining together for a festive meal on the first night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The wording of [Exodus 12:40-42](#) makes quite plain that it is a commanded tradition, an instruction straight out of the pages of Scripture to bring honor to God. He is the One who wants His people to observe it.

These two essays are intended to set the stage for a study every Christian should do along with preparing for [Passover](#) and the [Days of Unleavened Bread](#). It is highly recommended that, if nothing else, each person should listen to or read the transcript of John W. Ritenbaugh's March 26, 1994, sermon, "The Night To Be Much Observed." It will help tremendously to guide one's study on this commanded tradition.

In that sermon, we find that the origins of this tradition are not in Exodus 12, as we might expect, but far earlier, in Genesis, where we observe God's careful vigilance over His Creation. More specifically, we see Him watching over a chosen and sanctified people down to this day and beyond.

We also discover that the Night To Be Much Observed emphasizes the action of a grateful people toward an ever-vigilant God. Our response to His watchful care is to stand up and begin moving forward to keep our relationship with our awesome God going and growing. This yearly commemoration prods us to continue walking His path to the Kingdom in gratitude and humility.

The sermon reminds us that this tradition is a feast commanded by God to be eaten by those who had been purified through the sacrificial offering of the Passover lamb on the previous evening. On this night, they come before God undefiled and prepared to strike out on their journey to the Promised Land, which God oversees every step of the way.

In addition, the sermon explains that the Night To Be Much Observed adds to our clarity of purpose in keeping all seven of the Days of Unleavened Bread, sinless and constantly under the watchful eye of a great God who has purposed to make us just like Him. Only by His oversight do we have any chance to grow into the image of [Jesus Christ](#).

The first essay began with the image from the opening scene of *Fiddler on the Roof*: a fiddler perched precariously on a steep roof, sawing away on his violin. The main character, Tevye, insists that only through the keeping of their traditions have the people of his village been able to keep their balance. He states dogmatically, "Because of our traditions, everyone knows who he is and what God expects him to do!"

We [Christians](#) are all fiddlers on the roof, as it were, trying to live God's way in a dangerous world saturated with the evils of human beings under Satan's sinful yoke of bondage. The only way we can keep our balance is to live within the tradition of God's commandments, finding safety only by staying united with the Body of Christ and under the watchful eye of our loving God. In diligently seeking to honor God by keeping the letter, purpose, and intent of His traditions—which reveal the very mind of an ever-watchful and [merciful](#) God—every one of us can understand who we are and just what He expects from us.

- Mark Schindler

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

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How Do We Keep God's Festivals?

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Many of us have been members of the church of God for decades, and because of our long association with God's festivals, we forget that new members have little or no idea how to keep them and can be intimidated about what God requires of them during these appointed times. Richard Ritenbaugh points out the foundational principles new members need to keep in mind in observing the Feasts of God throughout the year.

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