

Why Are We Here?

We Are Here to Follow Christ
John W. Ritenbaugh
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At the beginning of this sermon I am going to reference a number of familiar scriptures that contain familiar proofs and thoughts regarding some basic doctrines of this way of life. I want you to be patient, because I am laying the groundwork for what will come later, and my groundwork is going to take a little bit of time.

Mark 2:27-28 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

These verses are the conclusion of a dispute that did not involve the question of whether or not the Sabbath should be kept, but rather *how*, the manner that it should be kept. Verses 27 and 28 contain telling information, and the first is the fact that the Sabbath was made for man. It is a special creation of God, devised and given to mankind.

I want to expand on that fact for just a bit so that we clearly understand. The earth was created for man. The sun was created for man. Water, air, food, and salt were made for man. Everything that was made was made for specific purposes within our Creator's overall purpose, and so it is with the Sabbath. It is a specific creation for man, and it serves a specific purpose within God's larger purpose. This means that the responsibility of using it or of observing it correctly is not limited to the Jews of Jesus' day. The responsibility of properly observing it is not limited to Israelites. It was made for man, for mankind. This means that Jesus' statement, on His authority, applies to all human beings as long as mankind walks the earth.

The second statement of importance here is that Jesus informed all concerned that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. The word *Lord* here is *kurios*. It literally indicates supremacy, might, and power; thus, it is translated in English versions as "lord," "master," or "owner," indicating one having authority over something or someone else. I think that we can understand that, as Creator—as the One who devised the day then, its institution right within the first two chapters of Genesis, and its appointment as applying to all of mankind represented by Adam and Eve—He has every right to command people how His special Sabbath creation is to be observed.

Adam and Eve were an unusual couple, in the sense of *unusual* meaning unique. Nobody else like them has ever existed since, and that uniqueness is that what they were and what they did received unusual judgments from God.

Acts 17:24-26 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings."

Verse 26 presents us with an example of Adam and Eve's uniqueness, especially Adam's. All of mankind, regardless of race or ethnicity or when and where they would eventually live, was

contained within Adam's blood—blood being a symbol for everything. That fact is easily seen. It is when we look at something that they *did* that we begin to see an interesting judgment or two by God.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

Because all of mankind was contained within that one blood, God's judgment is that all of mankind sinned when Adam sinned; thus, the result of that sin, for the sake of the judgment and God's purpose, passed onto all of mankind. Aside from that fact, in actual historical, practical experience, God's judgment proved to be true because all of their descendants have sinned and have come short of the glory of God just as Adam and Eve did.

A similar judgment is made in Hebrews 7:9, where Paul, borrowing the example of God regarding Adam and Eve, states that Levi paid tithes when Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, despite the fact that Levi was not born until four generations later. You get the principle here. When an ancestor does something, it may impact all the way down the line. It *may*, but not always; it may.

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Now we are going to see that same type of judgment put to a good, positive use. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." I think you already know about whom we are talking here. The next verse will make it abundantly clear.

I Corinthians 15:45-49 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. [Now you know we are talking about Jesus Christ.] However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; [In other words, the earthy people will do just like Adam did.] and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. [In other words, we are going to follow the same pattern as our progenitor.] And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

The result of this example of God's judgment can work in positive or negative directions. We are looking at the positive one now. Christ is the first man. He is the first blood, as it were, of a new race of beings—a new creation—and what He did can affect all who come under His blood and who follow Him in the way that they live their lives for God's purpose.

The Sabbath fits into this same picture as being one of those special, unique creations of God similar to the Garden of Eden. It was given to Adam and Eve and applies to all of mankind (especially following being called) even as the other nine of the Ten Commandments. In other words, you cannot just separate the Sabbath commandment away from all of the other commandments.

We are going to move on. We are not going to forget what we just went through here, but we are going to apply this now to the Holy Days in general and to the Days of Unleavened Bread specifically. Now why should we want to do this? Obedience to the festival commands is a part of the Fourth Commandment, and thus failing to keep them comes under the general category of

idolatry. Failing to keep them is thus breaking the first of the two great commandments of the law, the first of which is "to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, and all of our soul, and all of our mind."

Brethren, it is a reality that all of the activities of life are covered by the first of the two great commandments. *All* of our activities must show love toward God. That is a very high standard. Of course, included within this is the keeping of the Holy Days and, specifically, the keeping of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Exodus 23:14-18 "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning.

One of the significant things to note about the instruction regarding the Days of Unleavened Bread is where they appear. Notice that it was not just Unleavened Bread; it was Pentecost and Tabernacles as well, but we are focusing on Unleavened Bread. They are placed right within the midst of the terms of the Old Covenant. This attaches them as part of the national character and responsibility of the Israelitish people.

It is right here that most people make the careless assumption that the observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread and the other Holy Days, like and including the weekly Sabbath, is limited to the Israelitish people—the Jews specifically, or anybody, for that matter, who made the Old Covenant. However, not everybody agrees with that, even among Protestant commentators.

The Keil and Delitzsch *Commentary*, which is a German Lutheran commentary, states the following in Volume 1, page 146, regarding Exodus 23:14-18:

As the observance of the Sabbath and the sabbatical year is not instituted in verses 10 through 12 [of Exodus 23], so verses 14 through 19 do not contain either the original or earliest appointment of the feasts [all of them] or a complete law concerning the yearly feasts.

What did they see that others do not seem to see? Did you see what they said? They said that these things are part of the Old Covenant, but that they were not instituted by the Old Covenant.

You might notice especially verse 15: "You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you." That is *past* tense. It had been commanded earlier. Interestingly, Keil and Delitzsch translate that phrase in the *past perfect* tense, indicating that God had commanded them in the indefinite past. In other words, "As I *have* commanded you." This points at the very least to Exodus 12 and 13, but there are implications of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread as early as Genesis 14.

Let me make this clear: Like the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days existed *before* the Old Covenant. The Sabbath has existed since Genesis 2. Keil and Delitzsch are saying, "Like the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days existed before the Old Covenant and are not exclusively tied to it." The instruction here in Exodus 23 merely formalizes them as part of Israel's national identity that made them unique among other nations regarding religious observances. Since no other nation kept God's festivals or God's Sabbath, doing so made Israel unique.

Exodus 12:48-49 "And when a stranger [a Gentile, a non-Israelite] dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you."

Right here in Exodus 12, God is showing that the keeping of them was not limited to Israelites. As you can see, anybody who wanted to was free to observe them. What makes it especially strong is verse 49, where it states that "one law" applies to both home-born Israelites and the stranger who desires to observe Passover right along with the home-born.

In this law's spirit, the other festivals besides Passover would be included. Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost would all come under that umbrella of "one law." Some people claim that because these requirements appear within the Old Covenant, the passing of the Old Covenant removed from a disciple of Christ the responsibility of observing them. Brethren, the passing of the Old Covenant does nothing of that sort.

Even as the weekly Sabbath was made for man, so are the annual Sabbaths. They are all part of the Fourth Commandment; and I am confident that if keeping of them was not pleasing to God, one would not see clear examples of Jesus—*especially* Him—and then of Paul, later, observing them. They certainly did not think they were done away. All of mankind's failure to keep the Sabbath of God is one of the clear examples of the onerousness of human nature's failure to follow the examples of Jesus Christ even when those examples are clearly shown. The weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days—all of them—are important parts of a way of life.

We are going to go back to the New Testament again as I continue laying the foundation, with which we are almost finished.

I Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. (KJV)

The word *follower* is going to be the key word to the end of this sermon and, secondarily, the word *example*. Through the Apostle Paul, we are commanded to follow Christ and the Apostle Paul. He says, "Follow me, too, in addition to following Christ." Now why would the command to follow Paul be added to following Christ? The reason is that there might be requirements of Christian responsibility for which there is no example of Christ actually doing it, but there are examples of Paul doing it.

We are going to look more closely at the word *follow*. *The Reader's Digest Oxford Complete Word Finder* states that it means "to go or come after a person or thing proceeding ahead." Synonyms are given as conformed to, adhered to, comply with, obey, be guided by, modeled after, observed, heed, mind, go along with, mirror, echo, imitate, and copy.

Followers is an excellent translation. There is nothing wrong with the Greek word used here by Paul, but some modern translations have replaced that word with *imitate* or *copy*. The Greek word underlying that word *follow* has a sense of continuing what someone did before you, continuing on a path, continuing a work or, in this case, a whole way of life. In any one case, one is following an example.

Sometimes children play a game called "Follow the Leader" in which the participants in the game are to copy as exactly as they can whatever silly, athletic, or daring thing the leader does. Some of you older folks, mostly of the male variety, have played the game "Horse." "Horse" is patterned after the original "Follow the Leader" children's game; and if one fails to follow the leader's example, one finds oneself collecting points against oneself and out of the game. Remember that in regard to Christ. However, in religion, people have far too little respect for the importance of Jesus' example or the example of the first-century church.

This occurred right near the beginning of Christ's ministry:

Luke 4:16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

I do not see how, if one is to follow, to imitate Christ in His way of life, that this example could be more clearly stated. That same dictionary I quoted before defines *custom* as "the usual way of behaving or acting; a particular established way of behaving." Other translations state this for that phrase: "As He regularly did," or "And as usual, He went into the synagogue." The Sabbath is clearly established in the Old Testament as part of a way of life given of God to those who made the Old Covenant with Him; and Jesus, by obviously, regularly keeping it Himself, makes it abundantly clear that the Sabbath was made for and given to all mankind, not just the Jews and not just Israelites.

This next scripture is one that we need to have really deeply ingrained in our minds.

John 8:28-29 Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

That statement is true. Since Jesus regularly—as usual, as He always did—kept the Sabbath, then we can understand, by just putting these two things together, that keeping the Sabbath pleases God. That is so simple, yet you know what this world and its Christianity does. They just brush the example of Jesus Christ aside, and say, "Well, that's not for us." I do not know how it could be made any plainer than what it is. How could this common responsibility of a Christian be avoided?

Let me tell you another one that, to me, is really mind-blowing. This took place during that Passover service, when He said to His disciples,

John 13:15 "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

Do you think that the disciples just brushed that aside? I do not think so. They knew that when He spoke, He meant exactly what He said. They were to do what *He* did in imitation, copying Him, following the Leader.

John 13:16-17 "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

I know that once a year the pope goes to a prison and washes the feet of some prisoners there and, of course, it makes the news all over the world. However, how many groups claiming to be Christian actually do the footwashing? There are not very many. That is as plain as John 13:15: "You are to do as I have done unto you."

Do you know how it is explained away? They say that we are not to imitate or copy His example of what He did if we are a disciple, and this is why: They say that Jesus was *not* instituting a new ordinance, but was teaching them by His act of washing their feet that *they*, His disciples, should follow His example of humility, but were not required to follow the outer rite of footwashing. Interesting. Apparently the carnal mind's resistance against God's law is so strong that it never stops to think that actually, literally performing the rite as a solemn, deeply-understood reminder, as Jesus did here, in fact works in one to ingrain the attitude of humility as part of one's character everyday throughout the entire year.

I do not think that God would have assigned things of this nature—we will say in the Old Testament, where it was so obvious that He did these things—if they did not have some value to understand the spiritual characteristics of what is involved within the day. God does nothing without forethought, and everything has practical use to it to His purpose.

Are you aware that there is a principle involved of anyone who has dealt in athletics, in the artistry of learning to play the piano, or in developing his voice in singing or otherwise? Most experts will tell you that those who do the basic things and who practice the basic things over and over again, carrying out the fundamentals—the so-called simple things—are those who rise to the top in their area of endeavor. Doing these so-called ceremonial aspects, like the washing of one's feet, is following the same principle. When you actually do a humble act, it ingrains into the mind that this is the way you are supposed to be the whole year.

What if one decided to use that deceptive mainstream conclusion for every good example set by our Savior in the first century and the first-century New Testament Church? Believe it or not, as far out as the rejection of footwashing is, this is what they have done with virtually everything that has an Old Testament basis within it. They use this cover-all conclusion that we do not have to do these things anymore because *He* did those things because He was a Jew. In other words, He kept the Sabbath because He was a Jew—not because it pleased God, not because He was setting an example for all who would follow Him—but He did it simply because He was a Jew.

Let me ask you something: What, pray tell, did Paul, in the book of Romans, say is a *real Jew*? A real Jew is one who obeys God regardless of what his ethnicity actually is. A real Jew is one of the spirit.

I Peter 2:20-21 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

The kind of conclusion that these people have reached regarding the footwashing and other things, such as the keeping of the Sabbath, could possibly render anything Christ did and was recorded for our instruction as either outright useless or of such little importance as to make its influence so weak as to have negligible effects on one's life and character. How much clearer can the command to follow Christ be stated than "in His steps"? Do you know what that literally means? That means that everywhere that Christ leaves footprints, we are to walk right *in* those steps. I will get back to this thought.

II Corinthians 12:18 I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? [Recall the admonishment in I Corinthians 11:1 to follow Christ, and to follow Paul as he followed Christ.] Did we not walk in the same steps?

Are we not supposed to understand from this that Titus conducted his life, his service and ministry within the same kind of attitude, doing and teaching in the same manner and spirit as Paul, his teacher? Are we not supposed to follow Abraham in regard to faith in Jesus Christ for justification, or do we just pick and choose that which is convenient at the time?

To follow in another's footsteps is to continue in one's life, following the leader's course so closely that one's own life is a copy of the one doing the leading.

The illustration that was used by Peter in I Peter 2:21 is drawn from the way a child during Peter's lifetime learned to write the Hebrew characters or Aramaic letters. This was what was done and is probably still being done today, at least to some degree. The teacher drew a faint outline of a letter on the ancient equivalent of a piece of paper. Then the student over-wrote the faint letters by inscribing right on top of the teacher's example of the letter. Peter could not have made that any clearer.

I Corinthians 5:7-8 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

First of all, this is a direct command: "Let us keep the feast." This was written to a Christian congregation. The books of I and II Corinthians were written almost two decades following Christ's death and resurrection. Why even give such a command and use such illustrations if they did not directly apply to Christians twenty years after Christ's death and resurrection?

Here is something interesting: Moffat translates that one phrase in verse 8 in this manner—think of this, twenty years after Christ's death and resurrection:

Let us celebrate *our* festival, not with any old leaven, not with vice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of innocence and integrity.

Did you notice the possessiveness of that pronoun "*our*"? He wrote that as if it belonged to the church, and it does. This was written twenty-some years after Christ's death and resurrection.

In addition to that, this letter was written to a Gentile-dominated congregation. He was not writing to a bunch of Jews, as in the book of Hebrews; He was writing to Gentiles. "Let us celebrate *our*

festival, Gentiles." The Bible reveals no disagreement between Jesus' example and Paul's writing and example, regardless of whether the festivals are to be observed.

There exists a quite unusual commentary titled *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul*. Its authors were two Englishmen, Conybeare and Howson, who make some bold statements, considering that they were Protestants. The commentary is unusual in that the epistles in it are arranged in chronological order following the outline of the chronology of the book of Acts. In other words, their approach was that they wrote them as Paul was traveling; thus, this commentary shows many of the historical, political, economic, geographical, and even seasonal circumstances under which each epistle was written. Remember that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, and that all of Paul's epistles with the exception of the book of Hebrews were, by sheer numbers and location, written to Gentile-dominated congregations.

On page 346 of *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul*, Conybeare and Howson write:

The festivals observed by the apostolic church were at the first the same with those of the Jews, and the observance of these was continued especially by the Christians of Jewish birth for a considerable time. [They have to say that. It was twenty years.] A higher and more spiritual meaning, however, was attached to their celebration.

Jesus is clearly shown in John 7 observing both the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, but Pentecost is the festival most frequently named in the Bible in reference to the Apostle Paul following Christ's resurrection. Everybody knows that the events of Acts 2 took place on the day of Pentecost, a few days after Christ's resurrection; but I want you to notice a verse in I Corinthians, where Paul is writing to a Gentile church.

I Corinthians 16:8 But I [he is writing to this Gentile church] will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.

If we would look at the wider context, the implication is that Pentecost was pivotal to Paul's planning the use of his time. If it were of such importance, he would remain at Ephesus until it was observed and then leave. Does that not give you a fairly strong impression that he remained because he would be observing Pentecost at Ephesus with the Gentile Christians there, and then continue on his way?

Acts 20:6 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Again, the implication is very strong. As Paul was traveling, he undoubtedly observed the Days of Unleavened Bread with the church at Philippi, then, after they were completed, continued on his way. Conybeare and Howson write the following regarding Acts 20:6, showing that their comment given earlier was no fluke:

Here our thoughts turn to the Passover of the Jews of the preceding year when the apostle was at Ephesus. We remember the higher and Christian meaning which he gave to the Jewish festivals. It was no longer an Israelitish ceremony, but it was the Easter of the new dispensation. He was not now occupied with shadows, for the substance was already in possession. Christ the Passover had been sacrificed and the feast **was to be**

kept with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Such was the higher standing point to which he sought to raise the Jews whom he met in Asia or in Europe at their annual celebrations.

Hang onto that thought, because Conybeare and Howson pulled a boo-boo there by saying that such was for "the Jews that he met."

Acts 20:13-16 Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot. And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus. For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

Why would God even have these things recorded unless it was going to be important to those He later called into His church? It is not just a matter of keeping time, although that is certainly part of it. It is a matter of showing how important these days were to Paul and to the church, because they were observing them. Conybeare and Howson leave no doubt that Paul was observing the festivals of Leviticus 23.

Regarding the next scripture to which we are going to turn, Conybeare and Howson make two very significant comments. In Acts 21, we find that Paul indeed made it to Jerusalem in time for the feast of Pentecost.

Acts 21:17-21 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs."

Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

I will not go through the entire context, but what the Apostle Paul did in this chapter, especially in verses 1 through 26, set off a riot. It was not the Jews in general who rioted, but there was a certain group of Jews, really antagonistic to the Apostle Paul, who stirred things up. Others, of course, got caught up in the mob's mentality and also began to get drawn into this thing.

The Apostle Paul went specifically to see James and the others because of what we read here in verse 21: "And they are informed of you, that you teach all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses." Paul had done no such thing! I took you through those other scriptures so that we can see that everywhere Paul went he kept the Holy Days, including with Jews and Gentiles. We will see a little more proof of that later.

As usually happens, rumor gathered information as it went through time and space; and by the time it got to Jerusalem, they had completely twisted what Paul was doing, saying that he was doing away with the law of God. When Paul reported to James and the other elders who were there, what did *they* do? They glorified God, because what Paul was teaching was exactly the same as what they were teaching. It was just that Paul was a specific enemy because he had converted from Judaism to the Christian church. They did not like that one bit, because Paul was so effective in what he was doing that many Jews in the places where Paul went among the Gentiles were being converted.

Remember when Paul was in Damascus, I think it was, and forty guys took a vow that they were not going to eat until they killed him. That is how hot their anger was against him. Paul, though, was let down over the wall in a basket, and he escaped.

Paul was not antagonistic to the Old Testament laws and even went through things that were completely and totally ceremonial, like this thing regarding the laws of purity, in order to show the people that he was not against God's law. Well, what happened during the riot is that the Romans took Paul into custody, and this, in turn, triggered the series of events that eventually led to him being taken to Rome before the emperor to plead his case. I think that we can safely say that God allowed the riot to happen because He was going to use Paul in a way that was going to bring Paul to Rome, right before the emperor.

I am going to read a long comment from Conybeare and Howson regarding Acts 21:17-21.

Saint Paul's great object in this visit to Jerusalem was to conciliate the church of Palestine, and if he could win over that church to the truth, or even avert its open hostility to himself, he would be doing more for the diffusion of Christianity than even by the conversion of Ephesus. Every lawful means for such an end he was ready gladly to adopt. His own principles, stated by himself in his epistles, required this of him. He had recently declared that every compliance in ceremonial observances was to be made, rather than to cast a stumbling-block in a brother's way. He had laid it down as his principle of action to become a Jew to the Jews, that he might gain the Jews, as willingly as he became a Gentile to the Gentiles, that he might gain the Gentiles. [This is where these guys are really going off base. Paul indeed wrote that, but they have completely misunderstood what he meant.] He had given it as a rule that no man should change his external observances because he became a Christian, that the Jew should remain a Jew in things outward. Nay, more: he himself observed the Jewish festivals, had previously countenanced the practice of Nazarite vow, and circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewess.

The key revealing comment for the purpose of this sermon is that he had given it as a rule that no man should change his external observance because he became a Christian. The second one is, "Nay, more: he himself observed the 'Jewish' festivals."

If what one observed as festivals was of no matter, why did Paul, the teacher specifically sent by God to the Gentiles, even bother to very clearly and openly in presence of many Gentiles observe them? Remember, this is the man who said, "Follow me." He said that to Gentiles. Is there any record in scripture—or anywhere for that matter—of Paul observing the same festivals as unconverted Gentiles?

Let us consider something really far out; maybe this will illustrate to you what is at stake here. If a Gentile converted to Christianity and did not have to change what he was observing as a pagan, was it permissible for him to continue sacrificing an infant on the fires of Molech because it was only a ceremony?

This principle that Conybeare and Howson state opens the door wide for Christmas, Easter, Halloween, or any other day one individually wants to syncretize with Christianity. What weird, strange thinking! None of those days that I just mentioned has anything to do with God's way. In fact, each indeed actually teaches actively *against* God's way.

There, brethren, is one of the major reasons that those so-called Christian churches refuse to honor God by submitting to the examples of Jesus, Paul, and James, our Lord's brother, who, too, observed the festivals even as Jesus and Paul did. Instead of following Christ, they feel free to establish their own standards. They have reduced the Sabbaths—those special occasions of God for mankind's good, both weekly and annual—to nothing more than mere ceremony. The carnal mind, which Paul said in Romans 8:7 "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," has persuaded them to be blind to what Paul meant when he said what is recorded in I Corinthians 1:19-23, that "the wisdom of God is rejected as foolishness."

You would think that, if they read that, they would understand that what the Gentiles believed was foolishness, and that they were free to bring foolishness into the church of God. However, you see, these foolish people cannot discern the difference between what is commanded by God on the highest level and what is ceremonial to the command. It clearly shows that Jesus, the Founder of the Christian religion, and His followers—the ones He personally taught—observed in deference to what He taught was necessary for them to do.

We are talking here about the Fourth Commandment that men have reduced as merely ceremonial. Have they not done essentially the same thing to the others, especially to Commandments One, Two, and Three? Anything that has to do with God Himself is given a very short shrift in order for the carnal-minded to worship as they please and not as God commands.

I want you to think about how truly destructive this principle of being free to bring whatever you want in the way of observation into the Christian church is to unity. Turn to a scripture that every one of us knows by heart.

Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (KJV)

The *King James Version* translation is not wrong, but it is somewhat weak. The *Revised English Bible* makes it clearer: "Do two people travel together unless they have so agreed?" The reason this "traveling together" is more appropriate is that the Christian is on a walk, following Christ; therefore, the Bible looks at this as us accompanying Jesus along a way that is to the Kingdom of God. Moffat translates that same phrase as, "Do two men travel together unless they have planned it?" That is really clear. The *New American Standard Bible* says, "Do two men walk together unless they have made an agreement?"

Who is the leader in this "walk together"—Christ or us? If He turns to the left, are not we, the followers, also to turn to the left? If He leads us to the right, are we not to go to the right, too? If He stops to keep the Sabbath along the way, are we not supposed to stop and observe it with Him—or do

we turn aside and keep it with the Gentiles who are off on the left or the right? Were not the Israelites supposed to follow the Cloud across the wilderness? If the Cloud was going this way and the Israelites wanted to go *that* way, were they going to end up at the same place?

Can you see the simplicity of the illustrations that are given in the Bible that our walk is to be in the steps of Jesus Christ? We are to follow His example. What *He* does that is within the capability of a human being, we are also to do. We cannot do everything He did because God is not working through us in the same way. If He heals somebody, that does not mean that we are going to be empowered to heal somebody. You get the general idea. You cannot walk in a person's steps without following the exact path that he does.

Do not forget that we are pursuing here the thought of unity. In Jesus' prayer, He said,

John 17:10-11 "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

There is the path on which we are treading: the path of truth. Jesus is truth. We are following Him personally; we are following His words.

John 17:20-24 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

Another simple question: How can we be where Christ is if we are not following Him, imitating what He does along the way? Four times in that prayer, between verse 10 and verse 24, He prayed that we will be one with Him and the Father. We are to be one in spiritual truth. How can one be with Him if one is going off in a way that Christ is not? If that happens, one may not end up where Christ is, beholding His eternal glory, as verse 24 suggests.

Let us look at something practical. Can you imagine what it would be like to be in a congregation in which some were keeping Christmas, Easter, and Halloween, while others kept Karneval, or Mardi Gras; others kept African tribal festivals; others, Buddhist and Hindu celebrations; while still others were keeping the festivals of Leviticus 23? Would not that be fun! You know it would not be. It would be total confusion, and that is exactly what God names the culture mankind has cobbled together: "Babylon the Great"—"Confusion the Great—because they do not want to follow the Father or the Son.

Brethren, maybe I am being kind of mocking. Let me remind you, though, that we are following God only because of His mercy. If it were not for that, we would not be following Him, either. It is God

who has enabled us to make these choices in our lives, to follow Jesus Christ as closely as we can. Part of the reason that the world is doing this is that men do not perceive that God is preparing a kingdom. They see that God is only saving people, not teaching them His system and His way of life so that they can be prepared to live eternally in peace, functioning productively in His family kingdom.

Let us look at a proof that Paul never ever taught any of the churches that he pastored the way Conybeare and Howson said that he did.

I Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Here is a congregation that was not *one* with Christ, and the result of that was that it was filled with divisions and contentions.

Let us look at another place just to be reminded. Because there was a congregation that had a dispute going on within it, Paul said the following:

Philippians 2:2 Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is leading His church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries exactly the way He led it in the first century. The truth has never changed. Through the ministry, throughout all the churches, He is teaching us the same things about the Fourth Commandment, including the festivals, the same way the Apostle Paul did.

What you have just heard is my version of Mr. Armstrong's "Why are we here?" I do not know how many of you heard Mr. Armstrong give it twenty or thirty times as I did, but this was different. His went about it a little bit differently, but at any rate I have given you mine from a biblical, historical perspective. I hope it rings true to you and encourages you to be confident that you are headed in the right direction, despite the overwhelming majority of what that part of the world is doing that calls itself Christian.

Let us just bring this down to a very succinct bit of instruction that I wanted you to get from it: Why are we here? We are here to learn to follow Christ more perfectly so that we can continue following *eternally* in His and His Father's Kingdom. Now is our time to get the leaven of this world out of our way of life.