

Why Church Leaders Demand ...

Commentary for September 14, 2023 — Holy Days For Their Members

[By Dr. Ernest L. Martin, 1980s] There are definite reasons why ecclesiastical leaders prefer the observance of holy days by their church members. It is not difficult to understand if one is open-minded towards the issue. Essentially, it comes down to the matter of having CONTROL over the minds of the people.

It is far, far easier to gain religious authority over people, if the people have to mold every moment of their lives around "church affairs." The performance of rituals (which most Protestant denominations conveniently call ceremonies), is a main way of gaining human authority over other humans.

You see, not only will the ecclesiastical authorities be in command of people's lives while they sit in church on Sunday or Saturday mornings, but their control will reach into their homes (kitchen, living room, bathroom, and bedrooms) — on a twenty-four-hour basis! That is why food laws, days, times, seasons, and years are important to religious leaders. They tell people when they are expected to do things, and what they must DO to be (supposedly) in good circumstances with the "church" and with God. They then have authority over people that they need to rule effectively.

This is what happened in Judaism in the time of Christ. The whole nation was really under the control of the religious authorities — those who "**sit in Moses' seat**" (Matthew 23:1-4). Christ said those authorities bound the people with multitudes of laws (do's and don'ts) that imposed burdensome obligations upon many people. What was bad about it was that the teaching of the religious authorities required the people to do as they were told in order to obey God. As a result, the common people had to look to those religious men all the time for direction. Their lives were governed around what religious (or "church") leaders said.

For example, the calendar year was ordained (not by civil authorities which would normally have in mind a convenient calendar for commercial or agricultural advantage), but it was controlled to maintain the advantage of those who determined religious requirements. It led to much corruption among religious authorities because they could sell their "religious decisions or philosophies" to the highest bidder, and there was considerable money involved in the regulation of the calendar and other ritualistic requirements.

Most of the priests (who were in high ecclesiastical positions) were extremely rich and very aristocratic in their lifestyles. After all, they were supposed to represent none other than God himself, and the people were expected to do just what they said no matter how deceptively corrupt some of the decisions were.

Christ, however, was not too considerate of their religious excesses and the human control they had over the people. He called them hypocrites, blind guides, fools, serpents, a genera-

tion of vipers (Matthew chapter 23). They were basing their decisions on the commandments of God as found in the Old Testament, but with their additional interpretations they made those laws into the commandments of men (Matthew 15:1–9). Nevertheless, since the Jews were under the Old Covenant relationship with God, the New Covenant had its initiation only after Christ’s death on the cross (Matthew 26:27–28), Christ still expected the Jews to bear the heavy burden as those **“in Moses’ seat”** required (Matthew 23:1–4).

That changed with the introduction of the Christian *ekklesia* (Acts chapter 2). Note that the apostles were castigating those same ecclesiastical leaders (and not obeying their dictates) just two months after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 5:27–32).

The Ekklesia And The Gentiles

Then Gentiles were brought into Christianity. There was no requirement, as Peter said at the conference in Jerusalem (Acts 15:7–10), **“to put a yoke [of the Law] upon the neck of the [Gentile] disciples.”** Paul began to inform people that they no longer had to pay attention to the decisions of any religious authorities regarding the eating of food, keeping of days, months, times, and years (Colossians 2:16).

He said one day was the same as another (Romans 14:1–6), but if an individual wanted to observe any day, he could make up his own mind on the issue. He did not have to have men inform him what to do (Galatians 4:10). With mature Christian teaching, the matter of physical rituals or ceremonies fell into disuse. These were mere types of Christ. Once the reality came in the person of Christ, one’s attention was to be directed to serving Him — not to observing days, months, times, and years — and NOT to heed the men who governed such calendar periods.

In effect, rescinding the necessity to observe Old Testament calendar dates relieved Christians from the yoke of bondage imposed on those under the Old Covenant legislation. Paul, however, criticized some Gentiles who wanted to adopt such a government over their lives.

“But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known OF GOD, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years.

• **Galatians 4:9–10**

Paul taught there was only one mediator between God and mankind (and that mediator was Christ — only Christ!). A Christian did not need any man over him (1 Timothy 2:5). This was the teaching the apostles left for the *ekklesia* of the 1st century.

However, over the next 300 years the church became so powerful in the world that they brought politics and civil rule into effect. This was when the church once again imposed “days and rituals” (though they were different from those of the Old Testament). It was necessary to control the people and their money. Even today, some church organizations demand a ritualistic calendar that they control. Paul would have none of it! Nor do we at [ASK]. You are free in Christ.

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