

## ARE THE FEASTS PART OF THE MORAL LAW OR THE CEREMONIAL LAW?

In the following quote Ellen White says that there are only two laws, moral and ceremonial. "There are two distinct laws brought to view. One is the law of types and shadows, which reached to the time of Christ, and ceased when type met antitype in his death. The other is the law of Jehovah, and is as abiding and changeless as his eternal throne. **After the crucifixion, it was a denial of Christ for the Jews to continue to offer the burnt offerings and sacrifices which were typical of His death.** It was saying to the world that they looked for a Redeemer to come, and had no faith in Him who had given his life for the sins of the world. **Hence the ceremonial law ceased to be of force at the death of Christ.**" [Emphasis added] (*Signs of the Times*, July 29, 1886) Notice that Ellen White says that to observe the ceremonial law after the death of Jesus is a denial of Him (in other words, a sin).

Ellen White furthermore states that Jesus never observed the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law consisted of slaying a lamb when someone sinned in order to obtain forgiveness for that sin. This law was instituted when Adam and Eve sinned and ended at the cross, because Jesus was the Lamb of God slain for our sins. Since Jesus never sinned, He did not need to partake of the ceremonial law. Here is Ellen White's quote saying that Jesus never observed the ceremonial law. "**Christ passed through all the experiences of His childhood, youth, and manhood without the observance of ceremonial temple worship.**" (*The Bible Echo*, October 31, 1898)

However, Jesus did observe the feasts. John chapter 7 records Jesus' observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. Here is Ellen White's comment on His observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. "Jesus traveled up and down the breadth of the land, giving his invitation to the feast. When the sun illuminated the landscape, Jesus said to the vast throng: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. He took the opportunity of presenting himself to the people during the feast-days, when they gathered at Jerusalem." (*Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*, July 7, 1896) The following quote shows that Jesus also observed Passover. "Among the Jews the twelfth year was the dividing line between childhood and youth. On completing this year a Hebrew boy was called a son of the law, and also a son of God. He was given special opportunities for religious instruction, and **was expected to participate in the sacred feasts and observances. It was in accordance with this custom that Jesus in His boyhood made the Passover visit to Jerusalem.**" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 75) Luke chapter 22:15-16 records Jesus observing Passover with His disciples and in these verses Jesus states that Passover is not fulfilled until heaven. Here are Bible texts that show that Jesus observed the feasts. Luke 2:41, 42; Matthew 26:17-18; John 2:23; John 4:45; John 5:1; John 7:10, 14, 37; Luke 22:15-16.

Since Jesus never observed the ceremonial law, but yet He observed the feasts, and since there are only two laws, moral and ceremonial, under which law did Jesus put the feasts? The answer is obvious.

In the following quotes Ellen White tells us that Paul also did not observe the ceremonial law after the cross and he never taught his converts to observe the ceremonial law. "Paul did not bind himself nor his converts to the ceremonies and customs of the Jews, with their varied forms, types, and sacrifices; for he recognized that the perfect and final offering had been

made in the death of the Son of God.” (*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 105) “Factions also were beginning to rise through the influence of Judaizing teachers, who urged that the converts to Christianity should observe the ceremonial law in the matter of circumcision... They vindicated their position, which was in opposition to that of Paul.” (*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 121)

However, Paul observed the feasts himself and he also observed them with his converts. Here are the quotes. "But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means **keep** this feast in Jerusalem." (Acts 18:21) Ellen White comments on this text. "After leaving Corinth, Paul's next scene of labor was Ephesus. He was on his way to Jerusalem to attend an approaching festival, and his stay at Ephesus was necessarily brief." (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 269) Paul did not make it to Jerusalem in time, so he kept this feast with the Philippians (Gentile converts). "And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread." (Acts 20:6) "At Philippi Paul tarried to **keep** the Passover. Only Luke remained with him, the other members of the company passing on to Troas to await him there. The Philippians were the most loving and truehearted of the apostle's converts, and during the eight days of the feast he enjoyed peaceful and happy communion with them." (*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 390-391) (The eight days of the feast Ellen White referred to in this quote are Passover and Unleavened Bread.) "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." (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Since Ellen White tells us that Paul did not observe the ceremonial law and did not teach his converts to do so, but yet he observed the feasts with his converts, what law is Paul putting the feasts under? Moral or ceremonial?

Our own SDA Commentary tells us that John the Revelator and many other early Christians observed Passover after the cross also. This quote is from the SDA Commentary, Vol. 9, p. 362, and is quoting from an early Christian's letter, written about 150 A.D. "[p. 505] Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, neither adding nor taking away, for in Asia [Minor] great luminaries sleep, and they will rise on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he shall come with glory from heaven and seek out all the saints. Such were Phillip. . . and two of his daughters. . . [p. 507] There is also **John who lay on the Lord's breast**. . . And there is also Polycarp at Smyrna, both bishop and martyr, and Thraseas, both bishop and martyr, from Eumenaea. . . [Also] Sagaris, . . . Papirius, . . . and Melito. . . **all of these kept the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the gospel, never swerving, but following according to the rule of the faith**. And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, live according to the tradition of my kinsmen, and some of them have I followed. For seven of my family were bishops and I am the eighth, and my kinsmen ever kept the day when the people put away the leaven. Therefore, brethren, I who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord and conversed with brethren from every country, and have studied all holy Scripture am not afraid of threats, for they have said, who were greater than I, 'It is better to obey God rather than men.'"

**“After the crucifixion, it was a denial of Christ for the Jews to continue to offer the burnt offerings and sacrifices which were typical of His death. It was saying to the world that they looked for a Redeemer to come, and had no faith in Him who had given his life for**

the sins of the world. **Hence the ceremonial law ceased to be of force at the death of Christ.** [Emphasis added] (*Signs of the Times*, July 29, 1886) Since it was a denial of Jesus to observe the ceremonial law after the cross, if the feasts are part of the ceremonial law, then Paul, John the Revelator, and many other Christians were denying Jesus. Paul and John the Revelator wrote the majority of the NT. Do you think the Holy Spirit would use anyone who is denying Jesus to write a major portion of the NT?

"Anciently the Lord instructed His people to assemble three times a year for His worship. To these holy convocations the children of Israel came, bringing to the house of God their tithes, their sin offerings, and their offerings of gratitude. They met to recount God's mercies, to make known His wonderful works, and to offer praise and thanksgiving to His name. And they were to unite in the sacrificial service, which pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Thus they were to be preserved from the corrupting power of worldliness and idolatry. Faith and love and gratitude were to be kept alive in their hearts, and through their association together in this sacred service they were to be bound closer to God and to one another...**if the children of Israel needed the benefit of these holy convocations in their time, how much more do we need them in these last days of peril and conflict!** And if the people of the world then needed the light which God had committed to His church, how much more do they need it now!" [Emphasis added] (*Testimonies*, Vol. 6, pp. 39-40)

"Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles--a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth." (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 540-541) (Note that the context of this quote is the feasts, for this quote comes out of Ellen White's chapter on the feasts. We recommend that you read this chapter.)

Ellen White is recommending that we observe the Feasts. Since she also says that it is a denial of Jesus to observe the ceremonial law after the cross, if Ellen White considered the feasts to be part of the ceremonial law, then she would be sinning for recommending that we observe the feasts.

So, are the feasts part of the moral law or the ceremonial law? The answer is obvious. The feasts are part of the moral law. Since they are part of the moral law this means that the feasts will be observed forever. And indeed, the Bible does confirm that we will be observing the feasts in heaven. "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." (Zechariah 14:16) Zechariah chapter 14 is speaking of the same event as Revelation 22:7-9. By putting these verses in Revelation with Zechariah chapter 14 we see a more complete picture. First, Jesus descends from heaven the Mount of Olives which splits in half (Zechariah 14:4). Then, the New Jerusalem descends down (Rev 21:2). Then the wicked are raised and come against the New Jerusalem. (Zechariah 14:16 and Rev 22:9), at which time the wicked will all be destroyed (Zechariah 14:12, 17-18 and Rev 22:9). Interestingly, both the Bible and Ellen White tell us that the wicked are destroyed at the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:18 and Patriarchs and

Prophets p. 541, last paragraph). Lastly, the Bible tells us that after all the wicked are destroyed, in the New Earth we will be celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles from year to year (Zechariah 14:16). We will be keeping the Feast of Tabernacles forever in heaven, just as Leviticus chapter 23 tells us to, where God says four times that we are to keep His feast days forever.