

THE HISTORY OF EASTER, THE BATTLE OF MOUNT CARMEL, AND ARMAGEDDON

The Old Testament records the sad stories of the apostasies of ancient Israel. The story goes like this. The Israelites, under the leadership of a wicked king, would forsake the worship of the true God and instead worship Baal, the ancient Babylonian religion. Then a godly king would arise and cut down the idols and the groves where they practiced this Babylonian religion and would re-institute the worship of the true God, including the feast days.

We discovered that the word “groves” where the Israelites worshipped these Babylonian gods, is number 842 in Strong's Concordance. This original Hebrew word for “groves” is “ashayraw” which means “Asherah or Astarte, a Phoenician goddess, also an image of the same.” So these “groves” were idols of Astarte, which became the word “Ishtar” and then the word “Easter.” (For proof of all this plus much more about these gods see the book *Too Long In the Sun* and the website www.too.long.com.) This goddess Easter was called different names in different cultures, but she was the same goddess. In Ephesus she was called “Diana.” It was because of Paul's preaching in Ephesus that many were forsaking the worship of Diana, or Easter, which threatened the business of the silver smiths who made images of Diana. So these silversmiths started a riot in the amphitheater where they shouted for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” They would have killed Paul, but Paul managed to escape. You can read all about this showdown between Paul and Easter in Acts 19:24-41. The following is a short Bible study on this word “groves” in the Bible and the conflict between God's holy days and Satan's holy days.

According to the Easton Bible Dictionary, the definition of this word “groves” is “Asherah.” Plural Asherim in the Revised Version, instead of “grove” and “groves” of the Authorized Version. This was the name of a sensual Canaanitish goddess Astarte, the feminine of the Assyrian Ishtar. Its symbol was the stem of a tree deprived of its boughs, and rudely shaped into an image, and planted in the ground. Such religious symbols (“groves”) are frequently alluded to in Scripture (Exodus 34:13; Judges 6:25; 2 Kings 23:6; 1Kings16:33, etc.). These images were also sometimes made of silver or of carved stone (2 Kings 21:7; “the graven image of Asherah,” R.V.).

The following is God's curse if His people did not do what was right. Lev 26:30 And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you.

This is what God's people were to do instead: Numbers 33:51-52 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; Then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 24 Joash did what was right while Jehoida lived but in verses 17-18 he “served groves and idols.” This word “groves” means “idols of Astarte or Easter.”

In 2 Chronicles 25:2 Amaziah did right, but not with a perfect heart. In verse 14 he turned to the worship of other gods which kindled the anger of God against him.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 28 Ahaz instituted the worship of Baal. Baal was the son of Easter. Baal's conception date is on Easter and his birth date is on Christmas, December 25. In verse 4 it says that Ahaz sacrificed and burnt incense “in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.” According to Strong's Concordance #6086 these “green trees” were pine trees. Jeremiah 10:1-4

elaborates further and says that the heathen bring a tree out of the forest, fasten it with nails so it doesn't move, and decorate it with silver and gold. Verse 2 says not to imitate what the heathen do. This is where our modern Christmas tree comes from.

In 2 Chronicles 29 Hezekiah began to reign and he did what was right and re-instituted the worship of the true God. 2 Chronicles chapter 30 records that Hezekiah also re-instituted Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then in chapter 31, at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, all of Israel who attended these feasts then went out and “brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves (Easter idols), and threw down the high places, and the altars (of Baal worship) “until they had utterly destroyed them all.”

2 Chronicles chapter 33 records the sad story of Manasseh and how he re-instituted the worship of Baal and built again the “groves.” Verse 6 says that he “observed times.” In Galatians 4:9-10 Paul said to the Galatians that they were turning back to the weak and beggarly elements and observing “times.” E.J. Waggoner, one of the SDA church pioneers, addressed this text in Galatians. He was quoting from J.N. Andrews’ book The History of the Sabbath when he did so. J.N. Andrews was one of our church’s eminent theologians. Here is their quote: “To show that Paul regarded Sabbatic observance as dangerous, Gal. 4:10 is often quoted; notwithstanding the same individuals claim that Rom. 14 proves that it is a matter of perfect indifference; they not seeing that this is to make Paul contradict himself. But if the connection be read from verse 8 to verse 11, it will be seen that **the Galatians before their conversion were not Jews, but heathen: and these days, months, times, and years, were not those of the Levitical law, but those which they had regarded with superstitious reverence while heathen.** Observe the stress which Paul lays upon the word “again,” in verse 9. And how many that profess the religion of Christ at the present day superstitiously regard certain days as “lucky” or “unlucky days;” though such notions are derived only from heathen distinctions.” Gospel to the Galatians, p. 67, by E.J. Waggoner quoting from The History of the Sabbath, p. 186, by Elder J.N. Andrews. J.N. Andrews correctly saw that these “times” were the heathen holy days in honor of their heathen gods.

In 2 Chronicles 33:12, 13, Manasseh repented and turned back to the worship of the true God but in verse 17 it says that the people still sacrificed in the “high places” but “unto the LORD their God only.” This means that they hadn't destroyed these “high places” which were in honor of Baal so they were combining the worship of the true God with the worship of Baal. The Bible says that combining light with darkness is especially offensive to God. See Isaiah 5:20. The ancient Israelites did the same at Mount Sinai when they made a god out of a golden idol of a calf and worshipped it. They proclaimed this event to be a “feast to the LORD,” and by so doing combined the worship of the true God with the worship of heathen gods (Exodus 32:5). Note what God did in response. In verse 28 God killed three thousand men because of this apostasy. Obviously combining the worship of the true God with the worship of heathen gods is especially offensive to our Heavenly Father.

In 2 Chronicles 34:4 Josiah “brake down the altars of Baalim” and cut down the “groves” (Easter idols). He read God's Law (verses 14-18) and had this Law read to all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem (verse 29). After reading this law Josiah covenanted to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul (verse 31). The first thing after this that Josiah did was to re-institute Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Here's what Ellen White says about these verses. “Josiah did not say, “I knew nothing about this book. These are ancient precepts, and times have changed.” He appointed men to investigate the matter, and these men went to Huldah, the prophetess....In Josiah's day the Word of the Lord was as binding, and

should have been as strictly enforced, as at the time it was spoken. And today it is as binding as it was then.” (GCB April 1, 1903)

2 Kings chapter 22 records the same story. Here's Ellen White comments on this chapter. “When Josiah heard the words of warning and condemnation because Israel had trampled upon the precepts of heaven, he humbled himself. He wept before the Lord. He made a thorough work of repentance and reformation, and God accepted his efforts. The whole congregation of Israel entered into a solemn covenant to keep the commandments of Jehovah. This is our work today. We must repent of the past evil of our doings, and seek God with all our hearts. **We must believe that God means just what He says**, and make no compromise with evil in any way. We should greatly humble ourselves before God, and consider any loss preferable to the loss of His favor (RH Jan. 31, 1888).” Remember, the first thing Josiah did was to re-institute the observance of the feasts. We must remember that God means what He says. He commanded us to observe the feasts and nowhere in the Bible can it be found that He abolished these feasts. “When the Lord gives a man a command such as He gave this messenger, He Himself must countermand the order.” (MS 1, 1912). Nowhere in the Bible does God countermand His order to observe the feasts. He does say that the sacrificial system would end at the cross (see Daniel 9:27), but He never said the feasts would end.

2 Chronicles 12:1 says that Rehoboam forsook the law of the Lord. In verse 14 it says he did evil because he did not seek the Lord. In 2 Chronicles 14:2-3 Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD and broke down the images and cut down the groves (Easter idols) in Judah. However, he did not take down these groves in Israel (2 Chronicles 15:17). Interestingly, 2 Chronicles 16:12 says that he got a disease in his feet but “in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.” This didn't work and Asa died. Perhaps there's a lesson here for us? (On a side note, the modern medical system has as its symbol a serpent. Revelation 18:23 says, regarding Babylon, “For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” The original Greek word behind this word “sorceries” is “pharmakeia” according to Strong's Concordance. God is warning us that at the end time we need to be careful about taking drugs of any kind, legal or illegal.)

2 Chronicles 17:1-6 records how Jehoshaphat reigned and “sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand...moreover he took away the high places, and groves out of Judah.” Remember that these groves are Easter idols.

1 Kings 18 records the apostasy of King Ahab so God sent a famine for three and a half years. God sent Elijah to speak with Ahab who told Ahab he would meet him on Mount Carmel for a great showdown between the gods of Baal and the true God. In verse 21 Elijah said to all the people, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” Elijah told them to build an altar with wood and a sacrifice on it and the god that would answer by fire is the true God. The prophets of Baal prayed all day but nothing happened. At the end of the day, Elijah ordered another altar to the true God to be built on which he put wood and a sacrifice. He then ordered 12 barrels of water to be poured on it so everyone would know that any fire was truly a miracle of God. After praying, God sent down fire from heaven so hot that it even consumed the stones the altar was built with. The true God triumphed over Baal. Remember, that Baal's conception date is Easter and his birthdate is December 25.

Because of Israel's continued apostasy, and because Israel did not let the land have her sabbath rest, God allowed the Babylonians to capture the Israelites and take many of them to Babylon for seventy years “To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her

sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years.” (2 Chronicles 36:21) In Leviticus 25:1-7 God had instructed Israel that they were not to cultivate their land every seven years to let the land get its sabbath rest. In Leviticus 26:33-34 God says that if they did not obey His Law that He would scatter them among the heathen so that “Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths.” Obviously Israel had not followed these sabbaticals for the land during a period of 490 years (which is 10 Jubilees) and so Israel went to Babylon for 70 years (which is the number of years of sabbaticals the land had missed its Sabbath rest during a period of 490 years) so the land could get its sabbath rest. This is also why we will be in heaven for 1000 years because for a period of 6000 years the land has not had its sabbath rest and so the seventh millennium will be spent in heaven while this earth gets its sabbath rest. Obviously God takes His law very seriously and He is still following His own Law or Torah regarding the land getting its sabbath rest.

The 1963 version of the book *Bible Readings for the Home*, published by the Review and Herald, p. 333, says, “The millennium is a great sabbath of rest, both for the earth and for God's people. For six thousand years the earth and its inhabitants have been groaning under the curse of sin. The millennium, the seventh thousand, will be a sabbath of rest and release; for, says the prophet concerning the land, 'as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath.' 2 Chronicles 36:21. 'There remaineth therefore a rest [margin, 'keeping of a sabbath'] to the people of God.' Hebrews 4:9 This precedes the new-earth state.” Note that this law regarding the land getting its Sabbath rest is part of the Mosaic Law and not the Ten Commandments, showing that God still takes His Mosaic Law very seriously long after Jesus' death on the cross.

After the Israelites came back from Babylon, Nehemiah was instrumental in rebuilding Jerusalem. One of the first things Nehemiah did with the Israelites who came back from Babylon, was to read the Law to them and then institute the Feast of Tabernacles. Read all about it in Nehemiah chapters 8 and 9. Nehemiah 7:73 says that this occurred in the seventh month and on the second day of this month (Nehemiah 8:13) the people gathered together to read the Law. Verse 14 says they read about observing the Feast of Tabernacles and so in verse 15 they immediately sent out a proclamation to all Israel to come to observe the Feast, which they did. At the end of the Feast, on the 24th day of the month (Nehemiah (9:1-2) they confessed their sins. That is one fruit of observing the Feasts. Spending that much time with God leads His people to repentance, which is one reason for the observance of the feasts. Nehemiah 10:29 says that they covenanted to “walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes.” Spending all this time with God during this Feast led them to repentance. Here's Ellen White's comments on these chapters. “It would be a scene well-pleasing to God and angels, would His professed followers in this generation unite, as did Israel of old [referring especially to the revival in the days of Nehemiah], in a solemn covenant to 'observe his judgments and his statutes' (SW June 7, 1904). Note that God's “judgments and statutes” are found in the Mosaic Law and not in the Ten Commandments. Also note that the Feasts are part of God's statutes (see Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41).

So here is the picture. When Israel apostasized they turned to the worship of Baal and Easter and observed Baal's feast days. When Israel returned to God they cut down these idols of Baal and Easter, stopped worshipping on Baal's feast days, and instead instituted God's feast days as recorded in Leviticus chapter 23.

The controversy between God's feast days and Satan's feast days started in heaven before this earth was created. Isaiah 14:13 reveals a very startling statement on the part of Lucifer/Satan. “For thou hast said in

thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the **mount of the congregation** in the sides of the north.” [Emphasis added] Satan is literally declaring war upon God and stating that he will become greater than God. *Strong's Concordance* reveals that the original word for *congregation* is *moed*, which also means *feasts* or God's Holy Days. Satan is saying that he is going to sit upon the *mount of the moed*, or the mountain of God's Holy Days. The *SDA Commentary*, Vol. 4, p. 171, states that the words *mount of the congregation* comes from the Hebrew word *har moed*. *Har* means *mountain* and *moed* means *assembly*. God's people assemble at feast times. This verse shows that when Satan declared war upon God that he determined to invent his own feast days in opposition to God's feast days. And that is exactly what he did when he invented the feast days of Baal, two of which are Christmas and Easter.

The word *Armageddon* appears only one time in the Bible in Revelation 16:16. *Armageddon* is correctly understood by all to mean Satan's Last Battle against God. The *SDA Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7, p. 846, states that the first part of the word comes from the Hebrew word *har*, which means *mountain*. The second part of the word *ageddon* has been interpreted two different ways, the first being as Megiddo, which was an ancient city, and the second as coming from the Hebrew word *moed*, which means *feasts, congregation, assembly*. God's people *congregate* to have a *feast* or *assembly* as described in Leviticus chapter 23. The commentary tells us that people who believe in the second interpretation as being *moed* are those who “understand the second derivation, *har moed*, figuratively also, on the basis of its use in Isaiah 14:13, in terms of the great contest between Christ and Satan.”

The word *Armageddon* means *mount of the moed* which is the same meaning as *mount of the congregation* in Isaiah 14:13. Both mean *mount of the feasts*. This tells us that **Armageddon is a battle over whose Holy Days you are going to keep—God's or Satan's**. It is a test of loyalty. So we come back full circle to the battle on Mt. Carmel and make the same statement that Elijah made in 1 Kings 18:21. “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” The feast days that you observe will ultimately tell the world which choice you have made.

“Another deception was now to be brought forward...It was because the law was changeless, because man could be saved only through obedience to its precepts, that Jesus was lifted up on the cross. Yet the very means by which Christ established the law Satan represented as destroying it. **Here will come the last conflict of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.**” (Desire of Ages, p. 762-763) According to Strong's Concordance, the word “law” in the Bible is “Torah” which is the first five books of the Old Testament, where the command for God's feast days is given. Indeed, the last great conflict, or Armageddon, will come over this issue.

“The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view. There are precious ones now hidden who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” (5T p. 80)

Now here we are, nearly at the end of earth's history and the controversy is still the same. Whose holy days (holidays) or feast days are you going to observe? Christmas and Easter and the other ungodly holidays? Or God's feast days? Are you going to join with Elijah and Paul, who both fought against Baal worship and Baal's holidays of Easter and Christmas and who instead observed God's holy days, the feast days? Dear friend, we are all feast keepers already. Whose feast days are you going to observe?

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